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"SHEBA."

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By "RITA,"

AUTHOR OF "DAME DURDEN," "DARBY AND JOAN," "THE LADYE NANCYE, "GRETCHEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. ORMATROYD DEFINES UNSELFISHNESS.

OHEBA took her way past the wharves and docks, looking about her with considerable curiosity. She had only been to Sydney once in her life, though it was so near West Shore, and it seemed

to her a very wonderful and beautiful place.

It was too early in the morning for any great stir of life, and the girl being totally ignorant of what part of the town her mother lived in, wandered somewhat aimlessly about. She found herself in a narrow and unsavoury street chiefly populated by Chinese; then she passed warehouses, offices, public buildings, dark alleys, opening out here and there into wider and more important streets. Finally she made her way into George Street, where the shops were just opening, and an early omnibus or two was driving along in leisurely fashion amidst carts with market produce, fruit, and fish.

Sheba began now to feel somewhat hungry. She walked into a baker's shop and bought a couple of rolls and then asked the man who served her if he could direct her to Mr. Levison's private

house.

"Mr. Levison," said the man. "Oh, he lives out at the Glebe. It's a long way from here. You'd better take an omnibus. One

runs every hour from the corner of King Street."

Sheba thanked him and left the shop. She was not tired and a walk of four or five miles did not terrify her. Besides she had no more money and an omnibus would mean another shilling at

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least. She therefore set out resolutely to walk the distance, feel-

ing rather pleased at the novelty of her surroundings.

The houses grew fewer after a time and took the shape of villas more or less ambitious in design and surrounded by spacious grounds. Sheba glanced curiously at the gateways as she passed. At last she reached one sheltered by large oaks, and with a name carved in the stonework.

It was the name for which she was looking—"Oaklands"—Mr. Levison's place. Opening the handsome iron gate with considerable difficulty, Sheba entered, and found herself in a sort of avenue. The trees were gigantic even to her eyes, accustomed as they were to forest giants; the grounds all around were beautifully laid out with every variety of shrub and flowering plants, She found herself at last approaching the house. It looked almost palatial, she thought, though it was merely a wide two-storied building with a verandah running all round, supported by stone pillars.

The girl walked into the verandah, and passed two or three rooms with French windows opening on to it, and prettily draped

with soft lace curtains.

Suddenly she paused. The sound of a familiar voice reached her ears. She looked straight before her into a room, the like of which she had never seen. The light of a bright wood-fire played over the costly furniture, the books and pictures and snowy napery and shining silver and dainty china. There were flowers and fruit and wine and coffee on the table, and seated at it were two people: one a stout middle-aged Jewish-looking man, the other—

For a moment Sheba stood aghast. Could this be her mother; this the martyr she had pictured in the midst of sorrowful slavery! This laughing rosy comely woman with her fair hair crêped and puffed, her substantial figure in a loose grey morning gown of fashionable make and manifold trimmings of lace and ribbon, her fair plump hands busy with the silver and china of the breakfast equipage, her voice no longer harsh or complaining, but gay and cheerful as her surroundings.

Sheba felt stunned and stupified for a moment; the picture before her was so utterly different from the picture those mournful letters had framed, and her own fancy had suplemented.

Almost unconsciously her hand touched the fastening of the long windows, and the noise she made attracted Mr. Levison's attention. He turned in that direction and his exclamation of surprise caused his companion to do the same.

Seeing she was observed, Sheba turned the handle and walked

into the room.

Dusty, pale, with lowered brows and angry eyes, she stood before her mother, who was too utterly startled to do more than gasp out her name. "Yes," said the girl, "it is I. . . . I have come to see you. . . I thought you were ill, lonely, unhappy. . . Your letters always said so, and it was so long twelve whole months."

Mrs. Ormatroyd's face grew perfectly livid. If it had not been for Mr. Levison's presence she felt she could have struck the girl in that first moment of rage and shame and speechless fury. As it was she did her best to calm her face into some expression of maternal joy, and rose slowly to her feet and kissed her daughter coldly on her brow.

"This is a great surprise," she said with asperity. "Why on earth didn't you write and say you were coming? And oh, good gracious! what a sight you look . . . all over dust and mud."

"Is this your little girl?" asked Mr. Levison amiably and opportunely. "And so she has come over to see you at last. Dear me! Well, surprises are always pleasant. Come and shake hands with me, my dear, and let me see if you are at all like your handsome mother."

Sheba turned her dark and lowering face and wrathful eyes in the direction of the speaker, and then looked at him from top to toe. He bore the scrutiny with smiling good-humour. He did not guess for a moment that that uncompromising young mind had put him down as vulgar and ostentatious, and that it cost the girl a great effort to give him her hand.

"No," said Mrs. Ormatroyd sharply, "she is not at all like me in anything. What a very odd thing of you to do, Sheba, to come across to Sydney without letting me know. What were the

Saxtons about to let you?"

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"I didn't tell them I was coming," said the girl, turning once more to look at the changed and most unmournful figure. Ten

years younger. Yes, Ted was quite right.

"Ah," interposed Mr. Levison, "an impulse, an impulse of affection. How charming! A little—well, not home-sick—but mother-sick, eh? Upon my word I don't wonder at it! What should I do without her, so what must the loss be to her children?"

It was a new experience to Sheba to see her mother blush and cast down her eyes, and falter out bashful denial to compliments. It was an experience that turned her cold and sick, and made her ask herself if she were not the victim of some malignant dream.

"Well, well," continued Mr. Levison, "suppose we give you some breakfast; you look tired, and to have reached here by this time you must have started very early."

"I don't want any breakfast, thank you," said Sheba curtly.

"Nonsense," said her mother sharply, "now you are here you must have something to eat. If Mr. Levison will excuse me a moment I will take you to my room, and you can wash the dust off your face and make yourself presentable. At present you look a perfect object."

Sheba said nothing. She felt her presence here was undesirable, that her mother was angry and Mr. Levison surprised; but that matters would have been any better if she had only intimated her intention of paying them a visit, she never thought. In silence she followed her mother from the room, and Mr. Levison's eyes followed her with no small amusement and surprise.

"I thought she was quite a child," he said to himself as the door closed on the two figures. "Why, she is nearly grown up and looks like a tragedy queen. I wonder what she'll do when she hears the news? and what did she mean by saying she

thought her mother was unhappy?"

Meanwhile Mrs. Ormatroyd led the way into a spacious and elegantly-furnished bedroom, then closing the door and bolting it she turned round on Sheba and seized her arm like a vice,

while her face grew perfectly white with passion.

"How dare you?" she hissed out in a fury that nearly stifled her. "How dare you come here like this, you spy, you disobedient, prying, underhand, hateful girl! You know I detest scenes. I had my own reasons for not wishing you to come here, and now—now—."

Her grasp relaxed; she burst into a flood of angry passionate

tears.

Sheba only drew back and looked at her in white, stony wonderment. It seemed to her that her mother's anger was out of all proportion to her mistake. The old sickening sense of her own loneliness and lovelessness came over her, and yet a burning wave of indignation swept through her heart as she asked herself in what lay her real offence.

"I see now," she said at last, "that you had good reasons for not wishing me to see you. Why did you not say so in your letters? You represented yourself as lonely and sad and hard worked, and I... oh, I felt so sorry always for you, and I thought only of being able to work for you and keep you, and so did Hex, and all

the time-"

Her glance of wrathful disgust was like fuel to the fire. Mrs. Ormatroyd had been tried severely enough by the jarring discord of her presence, and now that she dared to add reproach to so unwelcome an intrusion it was unnatural to suppose that any maternal spirit could bear such treatment with equanimity.

"You are a perfect little idiot!" she cried stamping her foot. "Ever since you could walk or stand alone you have done nothing but worry and vex me. I never heard of any one doing such things as you do, never. Did you suppose I was going to wear black all the rest of my days, and never smile or take any pleasure in life again? Such rubbish! And as for you and Hex working for me—why, you talk like a baby! You work for me—you! Why, you haven't the sense necessary to get your own living, leave alone supporting any one else, and I am not of the nature to accept

sacrifices, even from my children! But, thank Heaven, there will be no need for you to work, as you so grandiloquently talk of doing, and as for Hex—well, he shall have only his mother to thank for his prospects. I have made up my mind he shall go to England and have a profession."

"But how—when?" asked Sheba in a stifled voice, as Mrs. Ormatroyd paused for sheer want of breath. "Go to England...

where will you get the money?"

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ne pt Mrs. Ormatroyd drew herself up and shook out her delicate grey draperies and looked straight at her daughter's white distressed face. Then she said slowly, clearly, without falter or tremor in her voice:

"I am going to marry Mr. Levison."

For a moment Sheba stood there perfectly motionless. Every drop of blood seemed to rush to her heart, and then flow in a boil-

ing wrathful torrent through her veins.

It seemed as awful as if her mother had said she was going to commit a crime. Marry Mr. Levison! Marry again, and that odious, stout, Jewish man with his thick lips and greasy black hair and vulgar manners. Oh, the shame, the horror; and her father,

her poor forgotten father!

"Well," said Mrs. Ormatroyd sharply, "are you going to stand there all day? I daresay you are surprised.... I was surprised myself. He is so rich... and he knows almost every one worth knowing in Sydney... but still he has done me the honour to propose, and though I don't approve of second marriages, this is quite an exceptional case, and I owe it to my children to provide for them, not leave them to the charity of strangers."

Sheba coloured hotly.

"You don't-care-for this man, then," she said.

"Care?" Mrs. Ormatroyd looked a little perplexed. "Do you mean am I in love, like some romantic school girl? Good heavens, no! But I am going to marry him."

"Oh, mother!" cried Sheba in a voice of such horror, and yet

such misery, that Mrs. Ormatroyd started.

"Why do you stare like that?" she cried resentfully; "and don't call me mother in that vehement manner. I hate it, and it's no use your making yourself disagreeable over the affair. I have a perfect right to do what I like."

"If you wanted money," Sheba went on regardlessly, "Hex and I would have worked for you. We thought and talked of nothing else all this year, and now to think of your doing this, selling

yourself to a vulgar hateful Jew just because-"

"Sheba!" stormed her mother, "be silent, I insist on it. How dare you speak so of my—my future husband, and your future father?"

"Never," burst tempestuously from the girl's lips, "never, never that! I wouldn't call him by that name if you killed me for

refusing; I won't live with him, I would sooner drown myself. It is wicked to put another man in poor papa's place; a child cannot have two fathers, and no woman ought to have two husbands.

It is a sin, and I am sure God never meant it!"

Mrs. Ormatroyd sank down on a chair and fairly gasped. What on earth was she to say to such an utterly irrational, headstrong creature, as this awful daughter of hers? Why, she was worse than ever, and she was too tall now and too old-looking to be beaten into subjection.

Was ever any mother so tried? . . . and there was breakfast waiting and Mr. Levison of course expecting their return . . . and how could she take this rude, outspoken, unmanageable creature into his presence? Why, she would insult him to his face.

Her heart grew bitter within her. The dislike she always felt to dictation or opposition, in no way helped her to condone Sheba's offences in that line. She wondered, as she had often done, why Providence had thought fit to inflict her with such a daughter, and only wished it were possible to beat Sheba, or shut her up here for twenty-four hours with nothing but bread and water. As this was not quite possible she next bethought herself of her old plan of rule by authority, and turning to the girl she said with dignity:

"Sheba, I brought you up to show your parents implicit obedience; a fine thing indeed if one is to be dictated to by one's own children. Now listen to me, and remember that I will not discuss this matter with you again. In the first place, Mr. Levison is not a Jew, at least by religion. He cannot of course help what his parents were. He is extremely kind and has been a very good friend to me and will be an equally good friend to my children, just as I am prepared to be a mother to his little girl. You know very well my health is not strong, and I am not fit to battle with the world, and it would be simply flying in the face of Providence to throw away such an offer as this. I was myself coming over to West Shore to see Hex and you, and tell you all about it, but you have upset all my arrangements and annoyed me excessively by this uncalled-for visit. It is just one of your mad freaks; I was in hopes you had outgrown them. However, now I have taken the trouble to explain all this, you must prepare to accept the change in my life as—as resignedly as I do. It is not my own happiness I am considering . . . only my children's future good, and one day you will see it, and perhaps thank God in your rebellious heart for such an unselfish and sacrificing mother."

Sheba listened in stony silence; her face was very pale, her lips sternly set. Scorn and disgust spoke out more plainly than any words in her look and attitude. As if she could not read between the lines . . . as if she did not know what her mother's "sacrifices" meant. Why did she not speak the truth? why was she not honest enough to say: "I don't like being an upper servant

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when I have the chance of being mistress. I want wealth, comfort, shelter, ease; I have the chance of them all and I mean to take it." Sheba felt she could have respected that statement if only for its coarse frankness, but to listen to pretty platitudes, misrepresented facts, to see selfishness wreathed and garlanded with floral tributes like the sacrificial beasts of the old idolatrous faiths, it was too hateful!

Mrs. Ormatroyd felt uncomfortable at the long silence, the colourless mute face. "What have you to say?" she asked sharply. "One would think you were deaf. Will you come back to the breakfast-room and be civil to Mr. Levison? Your manner when I introduced you was almost insulting—but then you did not know——"

"I will never accept him as my father," reiterated Sheba

"That," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, "may be as you please. If you do not wish to live under my roof I must make other arrangements for you. Thank goodness, I have one loving and dutiful child. Hex will be with me at all events. I shall go back with you this afternoon to the Crow's Nest, and see them all and break the news. I do not wish my actions misrepresented."

A little odd smile just touched Sheba's pale lips. "You need not fear," she said, "that I should do—that."

CHAPTER XXI.

PERSUASION.

Mrs. Ormatroyd returned to the breakfast-room alone. Mr. Levison was still at the table. He looked up expectantly.

"Where's your little girl?" he said. "I just told nurse to bring Dollie down, I thought she would amuse her."

"My poor child is dreadfully fatigued," said Mrs. Ormatroyd apologetically. "She has been foolish enough to walk all the way from the ferry, and is quite knocked up. I have made her lie down, and you must excuse her. She will be better after a rest." "Have you told her the news?" asked Mr. Levison.

"Of course," said Mrs. Ormatroyd with a fluttered blush. "It was a great surprise—very great. She is such an odd child, so different to her brother. Sheba has always been a trouble and anxiety to me. I really can't understand her."

"So she doesn't like the idea?" said Mr. Levison, rising and cutting short further explanations. "I thought she wouldn't when I saw how she looked at me——"

"Oh, I assure you," said Mrs. Ormatroyd eagerly, "she likes you very well, and she is so pleased to think I shall have a home at last."

He laughed—a little grimly. "Well," he said, "it won't matter one way or other. She will get used to me after a bit. And now I must be off. I shall be late at the office. Dear me—nearly eleven o'clock. Your little girl will stay now she is here,

I suppose?"

"No," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, "I fear not; she must go back to-day, and I am going with her if—if you don't object. I wish to see my son, and also make some arrangements with those people with whom Sheba has been staying. Besides"—and she looked at the ground with becoming bashfulness—"now that I am engaged to you, it is not—well, not quite etiquette for me to remain under your roof. I really think I had better stay with the Saxtons until—until the time fixed for our marriage."

"Oh, damn etiquette," said David Levison good-humouredly.
"I can't have you all that way off, you know. If you want to stay anywhere you can go to the Moss's in Fort Street. They'll be delighted to have you, and they're sort of cousins of mine by

marriage. I'll arrange it all."

"Just as you please," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, to whom a visit to the Crow's Nest did not specially commend itself. Then she rang to have the table cleared and took a chastily saddened farewell of her affianced, and saw him leave for his office with inward satisfaction. Once alone she ordered the carriage to be ready in half-an-hour's time, and then went to her room to change her morning gown for an out-door costume of plain black cloth.

Sheba was sitting by the window and watched her mother's

preparations in silence.

"I am going to take you back," Mrs. Ormatroyd said presently.
"I shall give the Saxtons a piece of my mind for letting you start off by yourself in this fashion."

"I told you they did not know," said Sheba wearily. "I left

the Crow's Nest at six o'clock."

"You deserve to be locked up and kept on bread and water," said her mother wrathfully. "If you were only a little younger I would do it. Heaven knows when you are going to get a little sense, or behave like a rational creature! I should have thought with such an example as Bessie Saxton's you would have improved in some slight degree, but your present conduct doesn't look as if you had."

Sheba set her lips tight and said nothing. She felt it would be useless. She had done an unwise thing in coming here, and she felt herself an unwelcome intruder in what would soon be her

mother's own house.

Its beauty and luxury did not appeal to her in any single degree, rather they awoke in her a feeling of shame and degradation, since it was for things like these that Mrs. Ormatroyd was about to sell herself, and so wreck the whole of Sheba's schemes for an independent future.

When the carriage was announced she followed her mother without deigning to cast a look at the rooms through which they passed. The only thing that moved her was the sudden appearance of a little, fair-haired, laughing child, who ran out into the verandah as they left it, and called out after Mrs. Ormatroyd.

That lady turned instantly, and then went back and took the child in her arms and kissed her with the warmest affection, explaining that she would be back next day, a fact about which

the little girl did not appear to concern herself.

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Sheba looked on and wondered if she had ever received such caresses, or been addressed by such endearing words. If so, she decided it must all have happened before her memory had been roused from the passive into the active state.

Then they got into the carriage and drove off, Mrs. Ormatroyd maintaining a dignified silence until they reached the ferry and

took the steamer across to the opposite shore.

When they reached the landing-place the first person they saw was Noel Hill. Mrs. Ormatroyd greeted him with dignity and immediately treated him to a dissertation on Sheba's extraordinary freak and its consequent trouble and annoyance to herself.

"And, how ever I am to walk to the Crow's Nest I can't imagine," she lamented. "I am so unused to exercise now, and Mr. Levison always insists upon my having the carriage... it is all owing to this inconsiderate and vexatious girl!"

"I never wanted you to come back with me," said Sheba curtly. "It was your own desire. And you know there are no

cabs or carriages this side of the water!"

Noel Hill interposed. He saw that matters were a little strained between mother and daughter. He suggested that Mrs. Ormatroyd should rest at the Parsonage, which was only two miles off, and then—and then if she felt equal to the fatigue she might go on to the Crow's Nest in the evening.

To this Mrs. Ormatroyd consented, and the trio set out to walk

up the long rough hilly road.

Mrs. Ormatroyd chattered volubly in a light agreeable fashion, having learnt during her residence in Sydney that she was entitled to consider herself fascinating, and even intellectual—and intellect, in her opinion, was chiefly made known to the world in general by fluency of conversation.

Sheba was quite silent. She felt faint and weak after her long journey and her long fast, and she looked so weary and so miserable that Noel Hill found himself again and again wondering

what had happened.

Mrs. Ormatroyd's incessant chatter about Sydney society and Sydney gaieties irritated him almost beyond endurance, though he did his best to listen with some show of interest.

He was thankful when they reached the Parsonage and he

could leave Mrs. Ormatroyd to indulge in maternal ecstasies over Hex, who had grown so tall and looked so well, and was

more like herself, she fondly declared, than ever.

As soon as his uncle appeared, Noel Hill slipped away. He had seen Sheba leave the room and cross the verandah, and he wondered where the girl was going. He followed and overtook her at the gate.

"Where are you going, Miss Sheba?" he asked quickly. "Not

to the Crow's Nest, surely?"

"Yes," said the girl, "I am not wanted here—why should I stay?"

"But your mother has only just arrived," he said; "you surely

won't leave her so abruptly?"

For all answer Sheba opened the gate and walked down the

road. He hesitated a moment or two-then followed.

"What has happened to you?" he asked quickly as he reached her side, "you look so strange, and your manner is so odd. Was your mother angry with you for going over to Sydney? I don't wonder at it. The Saxtons are also very much annoyed. You ought to have told them."

Sheba stopped short and looked at him. "Are they angry too?" she faltered. "I did not mean to do anything wrong... but it is always so with me... I only wanted to see my mother—to know if what Ted Sanderson had said about her

was true-"

"And was it?" he asked gently, as her voice broke into a half-

suppressed sob.

"Yes," she said stormily, "quite true! she has forgotten papa—forgotten us too, I think. She wears fine clothes and lives in a beautiful house, and she is going to—to marry the man who owns it——"

The disgust and wrath in her face would have amused Noel Hill had it not been for the inward tragedy it displayed. He was not surprised at her news. Mrs. Ormatroyd's hints and simpers had prepared him for it in some measure. Besides it was just the sort of thing he would have expected her to do, and then pose as a martyr for doing.

"And I thought she was unhappy," Sheba cried passionately—"unhappy and working herself to death for us, and my whole thought has been to lift the burden from her shoulders to fit myself to work that she might rest, and all the time . . .

all the time-"

She turned aside. Her chest heaved. Great bitter tears welled into her eyes. Noel Hill read the struggle going on within her heart, and he pitied her with all the depth and earnestness of his own. But he dared not tell her so. In her present state of mind he felt it would be unwise, and that—even if it hurt her—he must show her the path where duty led,

and bid her curb the resentment of passion, and the instincts of revolt.

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"Sheba," he said gently, "don't go to the Crow's Nest in your present mood. Come back with me and let us go to my own little study and talk this matter quietly over. I can feel it is a trial to you; but my teachings must have been of very little effect if you have not learnt that life is made up of such trials, and that they must be faced—endured with patience, not rebellion. You know I never preach to you it is not my way but be guided by my advice now. I don't think you will be sorry for it."

"You are always good to me," said the girl with a heavy sob. "I think you are the only person I have ever met who does really understand me! Yes—I will go back with you. I have let my temper run away with me as usual. I am sorry I ever went to Sydney!"

He did not say more, only walked quietly by her side till they reached the house and then led the way into his own little "den," as he called it, where he wrote and studied, and sometimes gave his lessons.

There he made her sit down in the big old leather chair, and presently brought her a cup of tea and some biscuits, which he insisted upon her eating before he would speak to her at all.

The result was that Sheba soon became calm and refreshed, and was more prepared to look upon her impulsive action in the rational light of her tutor's eyes. Her nature was firm, but not stubborn, and she was always easily ruled by affection or rational appeal; unfortunately her mother had never employed either of these methods, and hence it was that the two natures so invariably clashed in all matters that entailed discussion.

Noel Hill went to work gently and skilfully. He pointed out that a child's duty was obedience—up to a certain point; that her mother had a perfect right to please herself and marry again if she thought it desirable. It might seem a moral offence to Sheba's overstrained and utterly innocent ideas, but the world did not consider it so, and Mrs. Ormatroyd was not likely to sacrifice ease and comfort for sake of a child's prejudice.

"But I cannot look upon him as a father," cried the girl, "and I could not bear to live under his roof as she says I must—I could not."

"But if it is your duty?" said Noel Hill gently. "Remember that the Saxtons are not even relatives—you cannot expect them to offer you a home always—circumstances will be altogether different; and people will really blame your mother if you do not live under her rcof. You see you place her in an uncomfortable position as well as yourself."

Sheba was silent. Self-will, duty and inclination were having a fierce battle within her heart.

"Oh!" she cried, "why can't things remain as they are? not be always altering and changing I was so happy and I thought it would last, and now everything is different

-everything."

"Change is a law of nature and a law of life," said Noel Hill.

"Nothing remains quiescent, that is why happiness should always be received with trembling fear—not with exultant certainty. Existence has infinitely more prose than poetry about it, though that sounds an unpalatable truth in the ears of sixteen. As I have often told you, I hate to preach; but there are certain things that must be said, and, young as you are, you have learnt that sorrow is a more constant friend than joy."

Sheba moved restlessly. "I hope," she said suddenly, "that the dead do not know. I was thinking of poor papa. Just a year—barely a year and now to give his place to some

one else: call a stranger-husband."

Noel Hill looked at her with thoughtful searching eyes. "How true a nature," he thought, "and how deeply she will love—

some day."

It hurt him to see the pain in her eyes as they sought his, beseeching in some way for comfort which he felt he could not give—for duty is a hard thing to preach, and a distasteful thing to practise, and yet he could but speak to her of it, and its exactions and possible reward.

He spoke as he felt—sincerely, conscientiously, earnestly but all the time he felt very sorry for the girl, and he did not anticipate any wholesome results—to her—from the forthcoming

sacrifices entailed by her mother's new mode of life.

The past year had done her a great deal of good. He scarcely liked to think what another might—undo. But it was not his way to hint discouragement, and when, half-an-hour later, Sheba entered the sitting-room where her mother was still occupied in petting Hex, and painting a brilliant future for him as a reward for his patience and dutifulness in the past, all traces of ill-temper and insubordination had vanished, and she was so meek and quiet that Mrs. Ormatroyd could not understand the change at all. She was still more puzzled when, finding herself alone with her mother for a few moments, Sheba rose and standing before her said quietly: "I must ask you to forgive me for my rudeness this morning. I had no right to speak to you as I did. I will try to—to like Mr. Levison—if you wish."

Had Mrs. Ormatroyd been a wise woman, she would have accepted the girl's submission with some sense of the ordeal her spirit had gone through ere she would have made it; but not being wise, she only drew herself up haughtily and delivered to her daughter a lecture both severe and judicial on the subject of her unbearable temper, her physical shortcomings, and general

deficiencies.

It was gall and wormwood to poor Sheba to listen to it after the effort her penitence had cost her. But she did listen, and without a word, and when it was over only crept quietly away to the farthest and most remote corner of her old "wilderness," and there, throwing herself down under the great leafless trees, she cried as if her heart would break-cried as she had never done during all the weeks and days of this past year that stood out alone in her short and troubled life as "happy."

CHAPTER XXII.

INTROSPECTION.

Two months later, when the glorious Australian spring was holding its brief reign, Mrs. Ormatroyd was married, and Sheba had to bid farewell to the Crow's Nest. Never had the old house looked so lovely, she thought, buried as it was in masses of blossom from the peach and orange and pear trees that surrounded it so closely, and made the whole air heavy with their fragrance. Never had she so valued the time and liberty to roam at will through the wild bush tracts, where as yet neither house, nor hut, nor settlement betrayed the advance of civilized life.

For days before she left, the girl spent her time in wandering to all her favourite nooks and resorts. Sometimes Bessie Saxton went with her, but more often she went alone, or with Billy trotting at her heels; poor, pretty Billy, who must be left behind when his young mistress went to her new home, as Mrs. Ormatroyd would not hear of the Levison grounds being desecrated by such

a specimen of animal life.

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Bessie could not sympathize at all with her friend's dislike to the Sydney prospect. She thought her more than foolish. What was the use of being buried in a place like West Shore, where you never saw a human creature, outside the members of your own family, from one year's end to another? She had intimate hopes of sharing in Sydney gaieties and luxuries, for the new Mrs. Levison would surely invite her to stay with them. She was therefore very amiable at present to the girl, and specially bent on impressing on her mind the advantages that would naturally accrue from her mother's changed prospects.

But Sheba did not seem impressed by any of Bessie's arguments, and they certainly did nothing towards raising her spirits, or

reconciling her to the change so near at hand.

The day before she left the Crow's Nest she rose very early. and, making her breakfast off a slice of bread and some milk, she set out to bid farewell to the old house and the "wilderness." which represented to her so much that was happy, and sorrowful, and strange and perplexed, of her child-life.

It was very early—scarcely five o'clock—the dew still lay on bud and blossom, and the dusty road was damp and sweet, as if

with the tears of some new-fallen shower.

A soft wind blew the heavy fragrance of the peach and orange blossoms across her face as she walked past the old familiar palings; starry passion flowers were wreathing the wooden pillars of the verandah; the great oleander tree that fronted the steps was a maze of rose-coloured blossom, and its rich, sweet scents were to

Sheba as the greeting of an old friend.

She felt her eyes grow dim as she looked at it—the pride of the garden—the loveliest tree of its kind in the whole neighbourhood; that strong, sweet perfume turned her faint with many memories. Whenever she felt the scent of the oleander blossoms she always thought of one scene in her life . . . how she had stood under the great tree one mild spring evening, and Ted Sanderson had brought her a book, and she had opened it and read the first story—the story of a boy who had been accidentally killed by a schoolfellow in a fit of passion. There had been a picture of it, and she had shuddered with horror as she had looked at the beautiful young dead face, and the terrified, remorseful eyes of the boy criminal as he gazed at his victim. The story had been to her like a real thing. She had seen the very persons who took part in it—had followed out the incidents even to the bringing home of the dead boy in his coffin, and the agonized grief of his heart-broken mother.

She had been so wrought upon by the story that she had sat there under the rosy blossoms, with the book on her lap and the heavy tears falling on its pages, until long after the time she should have been in bed, and then had been sharply reprimanded for her conduct, and obliged to give up the book as a punish-

ment.

How it all came back to her now—how it always had come back every time that the oleander broke into flower, and its subtle perfume thrilled her senses with almost painful

intensity.

She wondered why memory was almost always painful to her, why scenes and faces and deeds became almost tragic in what they represented, or recalled. The fact of remembering too intensely is a great drawback to happiness—Sheba had always found it so. She wondered whether she always would find it so, as she stood in the old familiar garden and looked with loving and regretful eyes at every tree and flower that held a history of some sort for her. Then soberly and silently she walked on past the old well where the frogs were croaking, and past the hives where the bees hummed and swarmed so busily, and everywhere the ground was starred with the delicate pink and white of fallen blossoms, or rich with colour of newly-opened flowers.

The "wilderness" seemed alive with bird and insect life.

Bright-winged birds flew about the boughs, gorgeous butterflies fluttered through a maze of leafy shrubs, and a wall of tender green seemed to shut out the brilliant blue of the sky, and shut in the peace and solitude that nature loves best, and that always seems to consecrate her handiwork.

Sheba sank down on her knees and hid her face in her hands. Another chapter of her life had ended, and she felt instinctively that the future meant struggle, difficulty, hardship and—only

too probably-unhappiness.

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Conflict and duty—life seemed made up of these elements, and only the warm sure shelter of deep human love could in any way make such life endurable. But she was not going to any such shelter; only to a narrow and trying existence, at which she looked now with that sad hopelessness of extreme youth, when the soul is full of desires, and the world answers them with chill laughter, or heartless silence.

The thrill and ecstasy which had once swept over her senses as she pictured all too vividly what Love might mean, had faded

into a dim and colourless outline.

Filled to the core and centre of her being with thirsty, passionate longing after the good, the beautiful, the true, she only saw the gates of the future closing on all such longings, only felt her young eager soul strain as the ear strains after dying harmonies, to hear them sink faintly, irrevocably away into unreachable space. She knelt there in the silence and beauty of the young day, and wondered vaguely why life had always seemed to her so sad a thing; why even nature, for which she had so tender a love, always touched her heart too deeply for pleasure to counterbalance pain. And of such feelings she could speak to no one, having some sure perception that they would not be understood, and might only serve as food for mockery. As much as it was possible for her to confide, she had confided in Noel Hill, but there was a wide space between their two natures, and she knew that in his eyes she was but a child. Her heart was in excess of her mind; she felt too fiercely and eagerly to reason as to what she felt, and until she could subdue that spirit and bring it down to the nearer level of every-day common-place humanity, she would never find existence a comfortable thing.

If individual life was just suited to its individual surroundings, there would be an end to all such conflicts as these, and character would need no discipline, but expand naturally under congenial influences. But, looking out on the battle-field of humanity, we find that the surroundings are invariably at variance with the character, disposition and mind of the individual. Hence the perpetual warfare which Sheba's awakening soul began dimly to recognize, and for which her strange nature was as dimly en-

deavouring to arm itself.

Shut in now in her self-chosen solitude, she went over every

detail of her child-life. She felt sorry for herself as she let her memory range over those mistaken heroisms, those pitiful mistakes, those ill-aimed intentions which invariably fell short of their mark, those hours of prayers and tears and struggles! And amongst them all what a lonely figure she looked—uncomprehended and uncomprehending, yet feeling the keenness of need, the strength of impulse, as one far beyond her years and

experience might have felt them.

Sheba had gone through many phases of feeling and many grades of experience in her short life, by reason of that habit of hers of thinking out everything that came into that life. She did not pass things by as mere accidents of occurrence, but looked into the why and wherefore of them all, and formed her own theories respecting them. But now it seemed to her that her spirit had suddenly lost its way in the mazes of life. The irrevocable law of change had stepped between her and the peace and happiness she had enjoyed for one short year, and as she lifted her troubled face to Heaven and faltered out some fragmentary prayer, she yet could not but acknowledge that the vital principle of religion was as a dead letter to her soul, and that long familiarity with its "forms" yet seemed of very little help or sustenance in moments such as these.

A sudden wave of bitterness came over her heart. "What am I, that God should care for me, or listen to me?" she thought. "Have I ever had a prayer answered? has ever one single thing in my life been altered though I brought all my faith to the petition that asked it? No. It seems time and feeling wasted on nothing. It is all very well for Noel Hill to talk: he is a clergyman, and he lives for God's service, and perhaps God does

recognize him and his work-but as for me-"

There she broke off, almost frightened at her own audacity. "Oh, how wicked I am!" she thought, and a faint sob broke the stillness of her leafy shelter. "Why can't I remember God's

way is not man's way?"

But though she put rebellion aside, it was not conquered. She was too young and fervid for the philosophy of stoics, and that deeper, sweeter patience that comes as the discipline of endurance and accepted sorrow, was as yet a stranger to her

nature.

She had never felt so utterly lonely as she felt in this hour, because she had never before gone so deeply into the root and meaning of her feelings. The panorama of her childish life had unrolled itself scene by scene, incident by incident, until it had faded away, and now she seemed to awake and ask herself, "What next?" And even as she asked it she trembled, disturbed by some vague fear. Visions of a narrow beaten track she must perforce tread, of domestic tyranny to which she must yield, of perpetual self-sacrifice amounting almost to intellectual extinction

rose before her eyes, and her heart throbbed in passionate revolt, crying out, "I cannot bear it; this—is not life!"

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Then a sudden flush of shame stole to her cheek and her heart seemed to grow quiet and humble. What was she, one small insignificant atom in the vast heaving, throbbing mass of humanity, that life should come to her in other guise than it came to infinitely greater and worther souls? What was she, to demand a richer, fuller, more wonderful existence?—as if her will and pleasure were central figures in the universe, and her

nature deserved special response to its exactions!

She felt as some frightened pigmy who had taken up arms against a giant, and on seeing the giant approach could only

throw them down in terror, and beg for mercy.

She drew a long deep breath and pushed the heavy hair away from her brow. It seemed to her that she had ignored the Pattern of all lives, the Source of strength and Teacher of fortitude; that she must bring herself to sit at His footstool and learn meekness and endurance as the greatest of all life's lessons, because their learning involves the utter forfeiture of all self-glory.

It would be hard—she could picture nothing harder; but even as her eyes sought the far-off heavens a soft and sudden peace stole over her troubled heart, and a voice seemed whispering through the rustling leaves, "Do thy duty now: hereafter shalt thou learn the wherefore."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ENDURING.

"I REALLY think," said Mrs. Levison complacently, "that Sheba has very much improved. She is not nearly as passionate or as wilful as she used to be. Her manners are better, too—more self-possessed and lady-like. If only she was a little more presentable!"

She sighed and looked across the table at her husband. Dinner was just removed, but they were lingering over the pleasant frivolities of dessert, and Mrs. Levison was ready to indulge in the confidential chit-chat her soul loved, and which to Sheba was unmitigated boredom.

Mr. Levison stretched out his legs under cover of his costly mahogany, and tossed off a glass of wine before answering his wife's observation.

"Improved?" he said. "Well, I'm glad you think so; I don't. She's as proud as Lucifer and as cold as an icicle. All she seems to care for is books and music. When she's not reading she's

strumming, or singing. Isn't it about time her education was finished? She's nearly seventeen, isn't she?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Levison; "I can't believe it. I can't fancy

that I have a daughter grown up!"

Mr. Levison laughed a little grimly. Two years ago he might have fallen into the trap and made the expected rejoinder, as to the relationship appearing more sisterly than maternal—but that was two years ago.

"She certainly is grown up," he said. "You'll have to bring her out a little more this winter; she looks much older than

she is."

"You needn't say that," said his wife pettishly, "or people will say I have been keeping her back. Society is always ill-

natured."

Society—as Mrs. Levison called the compound mixture of rich Jews, wealthy business folk, and miscellaneous individuals of no particular status that made up her circle of acquaintances, to whose houses she went, and who in turn honoured her dinners and dances—was not at all ill-natured with respect to her, but she was pleased to think so. She liked to imagine herself an object of envy to persons who could not boast of descent from a good old English family; who had not so fine a house or smart a carriage, and, above all, knew not the glory of having a yearly box from England with the latest fashions in dress and millinery, with which she might adorn her comely person.

For things had gone very smoothly with the late Mrs. Ormatroyd. Mr. Levison was very good-natured and let her have her own way in almost everything. His riches were always on the increase, and he denied her few things on which she had set her heart. On one point he had been firm, though, most unexpectedly firm, and that was in refusing to let Hex go to England and study for a profession as his mother had so ardently desired.

"Stuff and nonsense," he said, in answer to her entreaties; "the colonies are good enough for men of capital like me; they're good enough for young whipper-snappers like your son. There are too many people in the old country already. We'll keep what we've got here. The boy shall have a good commercial education and a good berth in my office as soon as he's old enough, and I'm sorry for him if he doesn't like his prospects. I only wish I had had such chances. I'd have been Premier now."

So Mrs. Levison after a good deal of fretting and grumbling, to which her new spouse paid not the smallest attention, gave up the project, for which Hex himself was not at all sorry. He had no brilliant gifts and he hated learning, so the thought of "exams" had not been a pleasant thought. He went to the best school in Sydney, and it is only fair to say, learnt as little as he possibly could, though he became a famous cricketer and oarsman.

With regard to Sheba, her resolutions of patience and forbearance

had been severely tested. Her step-father never liked her and they were constantly at variance. If she showed the smallest inclination to proceed in one way, her mother persistently pulled her back into another. It was her system of discipline, as she considered Sheba terribly self-willed. She had engaged a French master and a music master for her, and considered that was quite sufficient to "finish" her education. Girls ought not to know too much, it made them conceited. But Sheba's passion for books, tempered by Noel Hill's judicious hints for self-instruction, stood her in good stead, and Mr. Levison was only too pleased that she should make use of his really very creditable library, which was quite a white elephant to himself.

Those hours her mother spent in dressing, visiting and entertaining or being entertained, were always spent by the girl in close

and earnest study.

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Often and often she longed for Noel Hill's advice and assistance, but for the first year of her life in Sydney she never saw him though he frequently wrote to her. However, she had recently received from him the news that he had been appointed curate at St. Margaret's, Sydney, and was coming over almost immediately.

It was the satisfaction and glow of expectance raised by this letter, that had led to Mrs. Levison's remark as to Sheba's improved

manners and disposition.

The prospect of introducing her daughter into what she termed "society" was not a pleasing prospect to Mrs. Levison. In the first place it would make her look old, and really with her easy-going life and her fashionable toilettes she was used to being complimented on her youthful appearance, and accustomed to consider herself as still on the safe side of that debatable ground, "middle-age."

But with a daughter as tall as herself, and of such stately manners and pronounced ideas, who looked quite twenty though she was not seventeen, what should she do? Australian girls, as a rule, were pretty and bright and lively, but Sheba had none of these attractions. No one in their senses, so Mrs. Levison decreed, would call that dark face, with its sombre flashing eyes, and coronet

of hair, and proud set lips, pretty.

It was striking, and so in a way was the tall young form with its stately grace of movement, but then now-a-days people went in for brightness, audacity, chic, as Bessie Saxton called it, and

Sheba possessed not one of these charms.

So she sat on there in her luxuriantly appointed dining-room and held forth to Mr. Levison on all these points, while he sipped his wine and thought complacently of the prospect of the next election at which he was almost sure to be returned, and paid no heed whatever to his wife's somewhat tautological discourse.

Meanwhile the object of that discourse was sitting by the wood-

fire in the library, listening half-amused and half-bored to the

precocious chatter of Miss Dolly Levison.

That young lady had been thoroughly spoilt by her father, in whose eyes she represented all that was perfect, beautiful and clever in childhood. His wife having long since discovered that weakness of his, turned it to good account, and also petted and flattered the child in such a manner that her natural good qualities were fast disappearing, and she was developing into a pert forward little minx, who tyrannized over every one in the household except Sheba. She stood somewhat in awe of her, and in a way respected her because she was so uncompromising and so straightforward. She was a pretty child with dark saucy eyes and a cloud of fair hair about her shoulders, and a passion for bright colours and gaudy jewellery, probably inherited from her Semitic ancestors.

She had a bright scarlet frock on just now, and wore a coral necklace, and had a gold bracelet on her little plump arm. She was holding forth to Sheba on the glories of a child's party she

had been to on the previous evening.

"No one had such a pretty dress as mine," she said complacently. "Mrs. Moss came up and asked who made it, and I told her it was a French dress, and had been sent out in mamma's last box, and Sarah Moss did look so cross. They have all their clothes made here, you know, by Miss Page, and she can't cut a skirt properly at all. Theirs hang like bags, and they will wear such big crinolines. You never wear crinolines at all, Sheba; but if you come out this winter you will have to. Mamma says she won't go about with such a dowdy."

Sheba smiled a little. "Won't she; well, I'm afraid then I shan't come out at all. I certainly will never wear a crinoline. They're too hideous for anything; making every woman look like

an inflated balloon."

"Well, you look quite as funny without one in your dresses," said Miss Dolly, tossing her fair crimped locks. "Whatever makes you go to that queer woman to have them made? Now at Clarke's in George Street you can get them very well done, and the Governor's family all go there."

"I like my dresses to be comfortable," said Sheba, "and Madame Toinette is an artist in her way. She is very poor, I know, and lives in a little back street, but for all that she has

taste and skill, and she pleases me."

"I never saw any one who cared so little about dress as you do," went on the child, looking at her with curious eyes; "your mother dreams about it when she's going to have a new one. She takes days to decide on the trimmings and flounces, and you—"

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"Have neither to decide about," laughed Sheba. "That is the

best of having one's gowns always made the same way."
"But when you go to your first ball—" said Dolly.

"I am not going to any balls," the girl answered impatiently. "Dancing is a ridiculous way of wasting time, and time is a thing for which we shall all have to account. Our years are short enough, and when there is so much ignorance and distress in the world, it seems wicked to shut one's eyes to it and spend one's days in frivolous amusements which benefit no one."

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"Oh, gracious!" cried Dolly, opening wide her own eyes, "you talk like a clergyman. Fancy not going to balls because other people in the world are in distress! I never heard anything so ridiculous. Catch me doing it! Why, I've thought out my first ball-dress already. I mean to wear white satin and pearls. I have always made up my mind to wear that ever since I read the description of the state ball at Buckingham Palace."

"I think if you were to read sensible books and learn your lessons, instead of studying dresses and shop windows, you would be all the better," said Sheba impatiently.

"I shall have plenty of money," said the child loftily. "I

don't require to be clever."

"You will be a true daughter of Israel," answered Sheba with asperity. "Money—that is a fitting god for a race who once worshipped a golden calf! As far as my experience goes I can only say that rich people are odious—a mass of ostentation, vulgarity, and pretence. I would sooner have brains than riches

any day!"

She rose from her seat as she spoke, and crossed the room to the bookcase. She had changed very much. She was tall and slender, and had a certain air of quiet dignity about her that stamped her every movement. She only wore a gown of some soft grey stuff, girded at the waist with an antique silver girdle; at her throat nestled a crimson rose, the only spot of colour that relieved the almost nun-like simplicity of her attire. Her hair in its glorious masses of dusky brown was coiled round her small well-shaped head; her face was still colourless, but had lost its old sallow hue, and taken that clear olive tint which is essentially a brunette's charm.

No one could have looked at her without interest, though probably many would do so without admiration. Her eyes had even exceeded the promise of her childhood—they made her face remarkable at once—they were so large, so deep, so full of passionate life and eager thoughts. To look into them was to look into a human soul, and lose yourself in a maze of wonder as to what that repressed and ardent nature would make of life.

The girl's face itself was quiet almost to repression, but her eyes were not to be schooled so easily. In their flash and fire the inner force of her nature spoke out, and told its own tale of rebellion, and its own longings for freedom.

"Are you going to read?" demanded the child pettishly.

"What can you find in books to be always reading them? I hate books—I always shall."

"You are a foolish little girl," said Sheba calmly, "and you don't know what you are talking about. Books are the food of

the mind, just as meat is the food of the body."

"Why do you want to be clever?" asked the child, looking criticizingly at her. "Is it because you're not pretty? You're not, you know. Mamma always says so. You are so dark, and have such a bad skin. You ought to use pistachio-nut powder. She always does. I've seen her put it on. It makes her skin quite fair, though it does get greasy after a while, but it makes you look very nice while it lasts. All the Jewesses use it."

Sheba coloured. "I shouldn't think of using face powder," she said indignantly, "and my looks only concern myself. What do

they signify?"

"They will help you to get married," said little Miss Precocity.

"Don't you want to get married? All girls do. At the Moss's they are always talking about it, but Sarah and Leah will have money, and you won't. The money is all my papa's, and it will come to me, not to you. I heard him say so, and that's why you ought to get married. I think you had better try the pistachionut powder."

"I think you had better go to bed," said Sheba sharply, as she turned her back on her little tormentor, and opened her book in

hopes that the hint might be taken.

Miss Dolly turned up her little pert nose with scorn. "Indeed, I shall do no such thing. I'm going to wait till they come in from dinner. I want papa to take me to the opera to-morrow night; it's the first night. The company have just arrived from Melbourne, and I want to see the great tenor, Signor Riola. Every one is talking about him. They say he has such a lovely voice. Papa must take me. Wouldn't you like to go? You've never been to the opera yet."

"Yes, I should like to go very much," said Sheba eagerly.

"Oh, well, I'll ask him to take us both," said the young chatterbox. "That's why I'm waiting till after dinner; he's always good-tempered then, especially if he's had that brown sherry, and I told James to be sure and give him that this evening."

"What is the name of the opera?" asked Sheba.

"The 'Prophet,' and I saw a picture of it, a whole lot of people skating on the ice. It was lovely. I wonder what ice is like, real ice, or snow either. I mean to go to England one day and see. Oh, here is papa. What a red face he's got. I'm sure he's in a good temper!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE "PROPHET."

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What an enchantment there is about the very first experience of any special thing.

It is brief—brief as the hue of the rainbow, the bloom of the grape, the sparkle of the dew—but its brevity does not make it any the less beautiful or divine to the untired eye, and the untried heart, of youth.

To Sheba no time in her life, before or after this night, had ever, or could ever, hold such magic moments. Anticipation thrilled her with its possible wonders. The stir and flutter of life around her, the beautiful building, the crowds of people, the perpetual noise and movement in the orchestra, were all part and promise of something better yet in store for her. Of music, in its highest and greatest forms, she knew very little, neither had she any very specific talent for it, but any melody that touched her heart, or appealed to her fancy, was capable of giving her the keenest delight and affecting her with the most intense excitement.

Her cheeks burned like fire, her great deep eyes shone and glowed with a wonderful light as the crashing chords of the overture fell on her ear. She became utterly oblivious of everything and every one around her; an emotion, so strong it was almost pain, thrilled her heart, and the music seemed to speak to her of great and vague and wonderful things, to which, as yet, she could give no name.

Then slowly the curtain drew up, and she felt herself watching breathlessly as it were the unfolding of a drama. The book in her hand had explained to her the plot and action of the opera, and after a time she grew accustomed to the incongruity of seeing people acting and moving to music, and setting their sentiments and sensations into various rhythms and changing vagaries of "tempo."

Then suddenly a stillness seemed to fall on the crowded house, and she heard a voice ring out clarion-like above all other voices. She was dimly conscious that a face was looking at her from amidst flashing lights and moving figures, and that as it so looked, and as the clear, rich notes rang out, something familiar and remembered struck suddenly on her heart, and for a moment it seemed to stand still as with the pain of a great shock.

Then it leaped within her breast as if endowed with new, warm life. She felt glad and startled all in one, as she watched that stately grace of motion and listened to that wonderful voice. For before her she saw again the stranger whom she had found halfdying by the Koonga waterfall nearly three years before. She wondered if he would see her—if he would remember Then she felt the blood dye her face with sudden shame even as she thought it. Why should he? What had she done for him after all?—and she had been only a child then. Everything before her grew dim and confused; she lost all sense of what she was looking at; she only thought of that autumn day—she only saw the foam of the falling waters—and stretched helpless at her feet the figure of a wounded man.

Then the curtain fell; there was a tumult of applause; loud cries and shouts filled the house—the curtain was swept aside, and alone, and looking straight at her across the footlights, was that remembered face. His eyes, as they swept across the eager, excited crowd, flashed suddenly on hers. She saw him start and move a step forward, then recovering himself he bowed and drew

back, and again the curtain fell.

The blood rushed in a warm swift tide to Sheba's brow.

"He has not forgotten," she thought in her heart, and even as she thought it, wondered why that heart should feel so

glad

She seemed like one in a dream. She sat quite motionless in that second row of the parquet—her hands clasped, the colour glowing like a rose in her cheek, her great eyes dilated and full of liquid fire. The music thrilled her, the voices and movement and action of the great opera were like the unfolding of a new experience; but that stately figure in its white robes and with all the tragedy of a doomed life foreshadowing it like a melancholy fate, appealed to her as nothing else appealed, entranced her as nothing else entranced. It was a living, breathing reality to her from first to last.

From time to time his eyes met hers. She little knew how that absorbed face, those dark, passionate glowing eyes touched him as he looked at them, set in a crowd of other faces. How they puzzled and allured him, like some memory that escapes just as we are about to grasp it. For he recognized nothing of the little bush girl who had saved his life, in this slender white figure with its eloquent face and marvellous eyes. But those eyes touched him and inspired him, and he sang to them, and not to the idle, curious crowd around, and when again and again they called him back, and the great space rang with his name, it was still to that one face he looked and in which he read his best reward.

Then for the last time the curtain fell, and it seemed to Sheba Ormatroyd as if all the world had grown mute and dark and

empty.

The whole night long she heard that grand music—she saw that one face in its love, its triumphs, its despair. All her thoughts seemed merged into a vague emotion, and she alternated between the intensity of sorrow, and the exquisite visions of imagined joy.

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He seemed to her as a being from another world, as something great and gifted beyond all mere humanity. In her ignorant, youthful, fanciful soul, the fact of his being set apart to interpret that masterpiece of genius seemed to give him a place of standing such as no man could lightly acquire. He was a king in his way, a king by might of genius, and as such she worshipped him reverently and afar.

That she might ever meet him apart from his mimic throne, ever speak to him or hear him speak, as on that day when first their lives had crossed, did not occur to her. That singing of his seemed to throb in the air and to echo in her heart, until all the darkness of the night grew glorious with its sounds, and it seemed to her that life could never be wholly sad or hard again if only sometimes she might see that face, and hear that divine voice. Thoughts and emotions like these robbed her of sleep, and at last she grew impatient of tossing to and fro on her pillow, and rose and dressed herself, and opening her window, looked out on the cool fresh beauty of the early day. Fleecy white clouds were drifting overhead; the sunshine broke slowly forth from amber mists, and all the sky grew clear and radiant.

Sheba turned suddenly away from the window and seized her hat, and then softly opened her door and went down the stairs and through the library into the verandah, and from there made her way with quick, elastic steps across the lawn and garden, and in a few minutes was out on the Sydney road.

It was very early, barely five o'clock, and they never breakfasted till nine or half-past nine, so Sheba resolved to walk to the Domain, which was about three miles distant and a favourite resort of hers.

The Domain is the Hyde Park of Sydney, but a park where nature has done infinitely more than art. Tropical plants flourish luxuriantly all the year round, magnificent trees tower proudly over lawns and flower-beds, and winding walks, and varied foliage of perfumed shrubs.

It was so early that Sheba seemed to have it all to herself, and she chose the less frequented walks and alleys, and her buoyant young feet bore her along with that swift and easy grace that comes from unimpeded freedom of limb, and perfect health and youth.

Insensibly the fresh air and the swift exercise calmed the excitement under which she had laboured for all those hours. Her step grew slower, she clasped her hands behind her—a trick of hers when walking alone—and half unconsciously her lips broke into the melody of that beautiful air from the "Prophet," where John of Leyden proclaims his mission to the people, and which she had heard for the first time on the previous evening.

As she was softly singing it to herself, she turned the corner of one of the dusky alleys and doing so came suddenly face to face

with some one advancing from the opposite direction.

She paused involuntarily, her hands dropped, her startled eyes looked back at two other eyes—laughing, interrogative—that flashed with something of her own surprise, and her own recognition.

She saw before her the singer at the opera the previous night. He had a little child perched on his shoulder, a fair-haired, beautiful little creature with great solemn grey eyes, and Sheba in a moment seemed to take in the likeness between them, even as the tall stately figure stepped back with a murmured apology

and a keen interrogative glance.

"Pardon me, but have we not met before?" he said with an easy deferential grace that struck Sheba as altogether different to her previous experience of men's manners. "I saw you last night at the opera, and I felt sure I had seen you and spoken to you somewhere, but I could not recollect where. If I am mistaken—"

"No," said Sheba colouring shyly, "you are not mistaken; it was at the Koonga waterfall—you had met with an

accident."

He started; she saw his lips whiten suddenly. "How could I have forgotten?" he said. "Yes, it was you who saved my life—who——"He broke off abruptly and passed his hand across his eyes as if to shut out some horrible sight. "I was not very grateful to you for saving it," he went on, as he looked gravely at the girl's changing face. "I was in as miserable a plight as any human being could well be. Death was so near that it seemed I might have as well taken the one step more to reach it."

"You should be grateful now that you did not," said Sheba

involuntarily, "now you are so great, so famous."

He looked at her as if in wonder, then a smile broke over his face. "Famous," he said, "oh, no, I am only a poor singer. May I ask what time you came into the opera house last night?"

"Just as the orchestra had commenced the overture."

"Oh," he said, "I thought so; then you did not hear the apology for Riola. He was ill and I took his part. The manager was nearly distracted. I don't believe he imagined I was capable of doing it; but I got through it very well, I flatter myself. At least, my master said so, and he has coached a good many singers in his time. It was really my first appearance, except in trifling things, though I have most operas at my fingers' ends. And the audience," he added laughing, "were not critical."

"I had never heard an opera before," said Sheba in a low dreamy voice. "I did not know it was possible for any human

voice to mean all that yours meant. I shall never forget it. I

seem to know at last what music can be."

"If you loved it," he said, "as I do, you would say that one never quite knows that. There are depths and heights which it has not yet achieved. It is like a vista of infinite promise that lures us on and on, and at every step the visions grow more beautiful and more alluring, yet even as we grasp them, fade slowly away, to tantalize us with possibilities yet unachieved; but I mustn't let my hobby run away with me! I feel I have never yet properly expressed my sense of your courage and of my obligation. I have often thought of you; but the years have changed you so much, that you must forgive my not recognizing you at once."

"I did not expect it," said Sheba, the warm colour ebbing and flowing under her clear brown skin. "Still I am glad you should

know I kept my promise."

His brow seemed to darken suddenly. He lifted the child down

from his shoulder and set him on the ground.

"And I," he said, "have kept your handkerchief; though every time I looked at it, it brought back one of the darkest and worst hours of my life. It is odd we should meet like this—is it not?"

"Yes," she said simply. "But I always thought we would—some day. Is—that—your little child?" she added with some

hesitation.

"Yes," he answered, looking down with sudden pride and tenderness at the quiet little face. "One thing saved out of a wreck of wasted feeling, and mis-spent passion."

"He is like you," said Sheba involuntarily; "but he looks

very mournful; is he shy?"

Not in the least; he will go to you if you desire—go and shake hands with the young lady, Paul," he added, laying his

own hand lightly on the little fellow's shoulder.

The child advanced and held out his hand to Sheba, looking at her all the time with gravely solemn eyes that made her feel strange and shy. She took the little hand, but did not stoop to kiss the child as would have seemed natural in an ordinary introduction. Glancing up, she met his father's eyes; again the colour flushed her cheek.

"So you think he looks mournful?" he said. "He is very quiet and old-fashioned, and does not make friends readily. He has always been with me ever since he was a baby, so I suppose that is the reason. But shall we walk on? It is cold standing

here."

He turned, and with the child clinging to his hand, walked beside Sheba in the direction she had been taking when they met.

That there was anything strange or unconventional in his doing

so, never occurred to the girl. It had all come about so naturally and so easily; there was nothing to cavil at in his manner or greeting, and he talked to her now as an old friend might have talked, until it seemed to her that he could not possibly be one and the same with that majestic white-robed prophet, who had

enthralled all hearts and ears the previous night.

Quite lightly and easily he took up the dropped threads of their last meeting and wove them into the story of his after experiences. They had been somewhat adventurous, and lightly as he dwelt on them, his descriptions were graphic enough to enchant Sheba's vivid fancy. He had been to the gold diggings at Ballarat, and had a continuous run of ill-luck; but amongst the many strange specimens of all grades of humanity to be found in those regions, he had come across a German professor, who in a sudden attack of gold-fever had left his native land and never

ceased to regret it.

"This man," he said lightly, "kept alive my one talent-if I may so call it, and it is to him I owe my success last night. I had always sung-I think I inherited a voice from my mother, who was herself an Italian opera singer-but he taught me what was far more important than mere vocalization. When he left the diggings and went to Melbourne, he took an engagement in the orchestra of one of the leading theatres, and I, to please him, studied music as an art and gained a living by teaching it-as a penance. A short time ago a large company came over from England to give performances of Italian opera, and some of them who had only minor parts, took it into their heads to decamp and visit the diggings. This was my opportunity. My friend and teacher introduced me to the manager, and when he heard me sing he at once engaged me. I under-studied Rialo, the tenor; and hence my appearance last night in Sydney in his part. He is still very ill, and to-night I appear in 'Trovatore,' and to-morrow in the 'Huguenots.' You should come to the 'Huguenots.' It is magnificent; some say it is Meyerbeer's finest work. For my part, I like John of Leyden, it suits me, and my old German taught me every bar of the music."

"Is he here in Sydney also?" asked Sheba.

"Yes, we lodge together. He is one of the first violins in the orchestra. Do you live in Sydney now? It was far enough away from there that I first met you."

"I came here nearly two years ago," said Sheba. "My mother

married again, and we live at the Glebe now."

"I know it. It is a charming part; much prettier than the town. Do you like Australia—are you a native of it?"

"Yes," she said, "I was born here, but my parents are English.

And you are English, are you not?"

His brow clouded suddenly. "Yes," he said briefly, "I have not told you my name yet, have I? The truth is, I have chosen

to sink my identity under another—for—special reasons. I am known in the company only as Paul Meredith. Probably, if I make a hit, I shall have to turn it into Italian, and inform the public that I am Signor Somebody; but at present I keep the English nomenclature, which is partly my own."

"And shall you be a singer always?" asked Sheba.

"I hope so. I like the life. It is triumph, labour, excitement, festival, all combined. Favour is capricious, but while it lasts it is a good life, and it is about all I am fit for."

"It is a great thing surely to be fit for it," said Sheba. "When I think of you last night holding all that multitude of people

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He laughed a little bitterly. "And if I died to-morrow not one of them would care," he said. "The fame of a singer lasts but with the breath of his songs, and there are always people to say the new voice eclipses the old. Who cares for the past summer when the glory of the present holds out its promise?"

"But the past," said Sheba timidly, "may have memories that make it sweeter and fairer than the promise of the

present."

He looked at her gravely. "True; but public memory is not addicted to sentiment. Only to some rarely-favoured mortal here and there has it been given to reach a height where Fame sits for ever enthroned, and men cannot but see, and hear, and remember!"

Sheba looked suddenly at his face. His eyes were dreamy and absorbed, and gazed far away into the soft blue space of the cloudless heavens. "I think," she said softly, almost reverently, "you might reach it if you would."

His eyes turned to hers—again that look as of repressed pain crossed his face. "No," he said, "never. It is not for me.

There is that in my life-"

He broke off abruptly. "I am getting egotistical," he said. "Never mind about my life, or my future. Let us rather talk about yourself and the strangeness of our meeting. I do not even know your name. It would scarcely do to call you by that one you told me of in the bush, for you are a grown-up young lady now."

Sheba laughed. "My name," she said, "is Ormatroyd, but I

think no one ever calls me that. I am always Sheba."

"I suppose even I shall always think of you by that name," he said. "And so you kept your promise that day. You told no one of your adventure."

"No one," she said. Then added timidly, "Was it really a

fall? You have the mark still on your brow."

"It was not a fall," he said, and his brow darkened. "I was shot at, and left for dead. The traitor was one whom I had

trusted, aided, loved—more fool I! Never again in my life would I do that—never, never again!"

"Oh," said Sheba, "that sounds hard."

"It cannot sound," he said, "harder than my life has been

made, ere ever I could say it."

(To be continued)

TRAVELS IN LONDON

IN SEARCH OF THE PICTURESQUE.

By PERCY FITZGERALD, F.S.A.

PART VI.

DICKENS'S CONNECTION WITH LONDON.

THERE is ever a pleasing, yet painful, interest in tracing out the many residences of Dickens in London, each of which, according to its pretensions, seems to indicate the state of his fortunes at the period of his stay. Each, too, has a curious old fashion—like the costume in which the gifted writer was painted in his early days—and is in good and sound preservation.

When a bachelor, he lived in Furnival's Inn, on the right as we enter, but on his marriage he removed to 48, Doughty Street. In this clean little street there is a prim monotony, every house being of the same cast—small, and suited for a clerk and his They seem indeed miniature Wimpole Street houses; family. but have a snug, comfortable air, and it is something to pause before No. 48 and think of "Oliver Twist" and "Nicholas Nickleby," written in this study. With increasing prosperity he moved from this humble but snug quarter to a more pretension mansion, "Tavistock House," where he lived for ten years. "In Tavistock Square," says Hans Andersen, "stands Tavistock House. This and the strip of garden in front of it are shut out from the thoroughfare by an iron railing. A large garden, with a grass plat and high trees, stretches behind the house and gives it a countrified look in the midst of this coal and gas steaming London. In the passage from street to garden hung pictures and engravings. Here stood a marble bust of Dickens, so like him, so youthful and handsome; and over a bedroom door were inserted the bas-reliefs of Night and Day, after Thorwaldsen. On the first floor was a rich library, with a fireplace and a writing table, looking out on the garden; and here it was that in winter Dickens and his friends acted plays." Turning out of the road one is struck by the rather stately air of the mansion. During these ten years he made it re-echo with his gaiety and cheery spirit. It had, however, a damp or dampish air, which all edifices near Regent's Park seem

to contract. Later it became the residence of Mrs. Georgina Weldon, née the beautiful Miss Treherne. Her portrait by Watts shows what she was in the heyday of her attractions. Her fine voice and cultivated style drew many to the house; the rest of her strange history is now familiar to the public. It has now passed

into the hands of some society or school.

Not far away is No. 1, Devonshire Terrace, a later residence of the novelist, where he wrote "Master Humphrey's Clock," "David Copperfield," and some other works. It is found near the Marylebone Road. This, too, is in an inclosure set back from the road, and was humorously described by its tenant as "a house of great promise (and great premium), undeniable situation and excessive splendour;" while it struck his friend Forster as "a handsome house with a garden of considerable size, shut out from the New Road by a brick wall, facing the York gate into

Regent's Park."

In Gower Street is a house associated with some scenes in the boy Dickens's life, full of pain and misery. At No. 4 (as it was then) Mrs. Dickens set up a school, or tried to do so. Mr. Allbut has found that, owing to a change in the numbering, the house No. 145 is the former No. 4. It is a strange feeling to stand before No. 145 and recall his own disastrous, even tragic account of this early misery: - "A house was soon found at No. 4, Gower Street North; a large brass plate on the door announced Mrs. Dickens's establishment; and the result I can give in the exact words of the then small actor in the comedy, whose hopes it had raised so high: 'I left at a great many other doors a great many circulars, calling attention to the merits of the establishment. Yet nobody ever came to school, nor do I recollect that anybody ever proposed to come, or that the least preparation was made to receive anybody. But, I know that we got on very badly with the butcher and baker; that very often we had not too much for dinner; and that at last my father was arrested.' Almost everything by degrees was pawned or sold, little Charles being the principal agent in these sorrowful transactions until at last, even of the furniture of Gower Street, No. 4, there was nothing left except a few chairs, a kitchen table and some beds. Then they encamped, as it were, in the two parlours of the emptied house, and lived there night and day."

This connection of Dickens with London is more profoundly intimate than would be supposed, and goes far beyond mere vivid and accurate description of localities. It is impossible not to feel that he pierced to the heart and spirit of the old buildings and streets, and this we feel instinctively by recalling his accounts of such places as now survive, of which there are unhappily but too few. It was thus that Victor Hugo seemed to interpret the old cathedral of Notre Dame. To give a slight instance of this sense of expression, which defies the uninspired observer, who yet instantly feels

its truth, we might take such streets as Wimpole Street, of which Sidney Smith gave the happy interpretation that "every thing has an ending, even Wimpole Street," and Harley Street with its peculiar oppressive monotony. Every one has felt this, yet who

could express it so well?

With such a guide the old streets and houses long since demolished and being fast demolished every day, revive before us; with them rises the old-fashioned London, its humours, its society, of fifty years ago. One of the results of this association is that as we walk through some of these old-world quarters, such as Goswell Street or "Lant Street, Boro'," (where Bob Sawyer gave his party), the whole Pickwick, or rather Dickens flavour seems to pour out, and the figures live again. It is not surprising that this connection between the gifted writer and the old bricks of London should have become a study, and a very engaging study, and in antiquarians' accounts of the great city it is now become customary to trace the haunts and localities of the places described in his novels. In an unpretending but lively little book Mr. Allbut has undertaken this labour of love and furnished a very useful little handbook to the Dickens explorer. From this one might profitably glean a few passages. It will be noted what a poetical instinct the great writer had in this respect, and he caught the true "note" as it were of making selection of what was best fitted for his purpose. This power of vividly imprinting the locality on the mind might be illustrated by that dismal gate and alley, "Tom's all alone," of which the site only remains in Bedfordbury, just out of Chandos Street, where the huge Peabody Buildings rise, though it has been claimed for other localities. Indeed close to the upper end of Shaftesbury Avenue there is a strange forlorn alley with a dilapidated tottering old inclosure beyond, which would exactly serve for the original. And in Russell Court, that curious winding passage leading to the pit door of "Old Drury," we may still see the gate of the dismal burial ground, on whose step Lady Deadlock was found. It still looks exactly as in the print, "with houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate." This depressing intramural burial ground has been garnished up into a recreation inclosure, and is but a trifle less gloomy than a cheerful mortuary house being built at one side.

In "Pickwick" it will be recollected how Mr. Perker's clerk had to be fetched from a tavern in Clare Market, at the back of New Inn, and the "George the Fourth" seems to answer accurately to this description, more particularly as it used to be, and may be still, a place of convivial resort. It is strange to think how Mr. Pickwick without scruple sat down here in the cosy parlour to have hi tumbler and listen for an hour and more to the stories of the old Inns, Dane's, Clement's and New, and by which he was surrounded. "In the lower windows, which were decorated with curtains of a

saffron hue, dangled two or three printed cards, bearing reference to Devonshire cyder and Dantzic spruce, while a large black board, announcing in white letters to an enlightened public, that there were 500,000 barrels of double stout in the cellars of the establishment, left the mind in a state of not unpleasing doubt and uncertainty as to the precise direction in the bowels of the earth, in which this mighty cavern might be supposed to extend."

This house, however, in the story is called the "Magpie and Stump," a name borrowed perhaps from the existing "Magpie and

Stump" to be found in Fetter Lane.

Dickens always delighted in the mystery attendant on banks and their cashiers, old mouldy mercantile houses where yet a large and safe business was done, and these things he could interpret and give significance to, just as Wordsworth and the later poets did with their favourite district. When Temple Bar was removed in 1878, there was removed with it a building which touched it, and was as old and grimy, Child's venerable bank. It is difficult to call up either structure now, though the frequent "omnibus outside" may have occasionally turned his eyes to the blackened walls and the central windows in the Bar, a sort of store room where were kept stacked away all the old account books of the firm. The late Peter Cunningham was allowed, I believe, to rummage here, and discovered some curious documents, among which were cheques drawn by Nell Gwynne, who kept her account with the Childs or the predecessors of the firm. Speaking of the old house Dickens says, in the "Tale of Two Cities:"

"Tellson's Bank, by Temple Bar, was an old-fashioned place even in the year 1780. It was very small, very dark, very ugly, very incommodious. Any one of the partners would have disinherited his son on the question of rebuilding Tellson's. Thus it had come to pass that Tellson's was the triumphant perfection of inconvenience. After bursting open a door of idiotic obstinacy with a weak rattle in its throat, you fell into Tellson's, down two steps, and came to your senses in a miserable little shop, with two little counters; where the oldest of men made your cheque shake as if the wind rustled it, while they examined the signature by the dingiest of windows, which were always under a shower-bath of mud from Fleet Street, and which were made the dingier by their own iron bars proper and the shadow of Temple Bar."

Dickens just lived to see the extraordinary wholesale reformation that took place in the construction of the Holborn Viaduct, with the levelling and sweeping away of some of his most popular localities. The Holborn Valley before consisted of two steep hills, of which Snow Hill was one, and on Snow Hill was "The Saracen's Head," where Mr. Squeers invariably put up. This old hostelry stood close to St. Sepulchre's Church, on the ground, Mr. Allbutt

states, now covered by the new police office.

It is pleasant tracking out others of these old inns, to which the

magic touch of Dickens imparted a singular life and colour. Such was "The George and Vulture," a favourite house of Mr. Pickwick's, and which is to be found in George Yard, Lombard Street, in the shape of the existing Thomas' Chop House. In Gracechurch Street, where we come to Bull's Head Passage, we find "The Green Dragon," which is not unlikely to be "The Blue Boar," which Mr. Weller, Senior, much frequented.

CAMPDEN HILL.

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THE wanderer, or walker, in London will find few places more welcome or pleasing than the district known as Campden Hill. For a spot so embedded in town, it has a curious rural note of its own, an old-fashioned air, as though it declined to go with the The air, too, is tempered and softened; there are numbers of pretty places, with spreading grounds, old trees, and older villas. Those persons who have been fortunate enough to secure places here in good time are to be envied. The curious part is that it is bounded all round by the most uninviting prosaic districts—on one side by the frowsy Notting Hill Gate, on the other by the common high road to Hammersmith, crowded with omnibuses and carts. But ascend the gentle hill, from whatever direction, and you find yourself puzzled by the antique simplicity and suburban air of the place. Of course there are eyesores and blemishes—the dreadful waterworks in the very centre, to say nothing of numerous modern "Follys," fantastic freaks in the way of enormously tall houses and various monstrosities. Coming up from the broad cross road which joins Notting Hill and Kensington, we ascend a sort of sheltered lane, with all sorts of ancient tenements, somewhat "shaky," each with his garden and inclosing wall, such as one might encounter at Kew or Chiswick. Many of these have been judiciously adapted and added to by the thriving artist or littérateur. This portion might be called the town side of Campden Hill, and there are also the modern builders' terraces. Campden House presents no tangible idea to the present generation, yet in its day it and its enterprising owner furnished much talk and speculation in artistic circles. Mr. Wooler was passionately fond of theatricals, and the private theatre in his house became celebrated, the owner himself gravitating towards the genuine stage.

Within an easy walk of Campden Hill, past Hammersmith, we come to a curious and interesting place, which to one unprepared leaves a sense of surprise and quaintness. You turn off the road to the right, pass underneath the railway arch—indeed, the railway embankment, prolonged parallel to the road, does service as a sort of sheltering barrier—and find ourselves at the settlement known as Bedford Park. The feeling is as of a scenic opera, or of a street out of one of those "Fancy Fayres" which were a fashionable "fad" a few years ago, for here we have a regular Queen Anne

colony, every street and house laid out after fixed designs and with infinite variety, and suited to every size of purse. The surprising part is that this should have been designed specially, and should not have grown up by degrees, a tract of land having been bought and laid out in very pleasing fashion, with houses and

gardens of the more modern pattern.

Lambeth was perhaps the last London quarter which retained this antique and picturesque air. Up to a few years ago a careless walk revealed all kinds of curious and interesting houses. Then seven or eight years ago there was to be seen in South Lambeth Road the house of the Tradescants, with a charming little park round it, which was the first Botanic Garden established in England, while in the house the Ashmolean Museum was first exhibited. This has now been swept away; the "jerry builder" has been hard at work, and has covered it with brick terraces. With Lambeth is associated a curious legend known as that of "Pedlar's Acre," a term familiar, but of unknown or indistinct This painted window represented a pedlar and his dog, and the story handed down was that a pedlar had left his bit of land to the church, on condition that this memorial was preserved. It is certain, whether this tale be an ower true one or not, that a piece of land hard by Westminster Bridge, held by a poor artisan, which was originally worth four shillings an acre, now brings in over £1,000 a year. Many years ago the pedlar and his dog was removed to make way for a brand new window in memory of a Mrs. Colambell and a Mrs. Basher, wives of a Lamb eth doctor, who was clerk to the overseers. Unhappily in London there is no security whatever for the preservation of memorials, which may disappear any morning.

SOME OLD ALMSHOUSES.

WE would scarcely expect to find a lesson in art among the slums and squalid streets that lurk behind Victoria Street, Westminster, nor could we expect to light on much in the way of antique survival. Yet here we come on at least three interesting old edifices -almshouses and schools-which in their aspect and surroundings are a charming sort of surprise. Passing out of Victoria Street, where there is the crush and noise about "The Stores," down a small alley, we come to a little gem of its kind, as it will seem to the true artist, a small charity school, standing in its walled inclosure. It is of Queen Anne date and pattern, and is no more than a simple square little hall. But how quaint and varied is it; how are its surfaces broken, while every side offers a different pattern. The honest brick is of a fine plum colour; the wall is daintily divided by pilasters; delicate, unobtrusive cornices run around; the windows are shaped in proportion, and the doorways are of such extraordinary elegance, it is difficult to decide between them.

The whole approach in front, the gateway and its piers, the flight of steps, the door itself—all strike as being the work of a tasteful artist. Over the door is the pleasantly rococo figure of "The Blew Coat Boy" in his niche. There is a little garden behind with steps leading down, and a sort of dédendance attached, similar in style, but acting as a sort of foil. There is a charm about the little unpretentious building that is extraordinary. Unhappily, it needs repair and restoration, though it is not dilapidated; no one, however, seems to care for it, and a builder has been allowed to construct a sort of "lean-to shed" beside it. By-and-by it is likely enough to pass away, and be swept off that coveted piece of ground. No one who appreciates the grace and charm of architecture can fail to admire it.

Passing by this interesting structure and making our way a little farther on in the direction of James Street, we come to a bit of almost rural life—a perfect picture, which few would suspect was to be found so close to these busy haunts of men. This is a group of old almshouses known as Lady Dacre's—a large square, covered on three sides by the buildings. They are exactly of the pattern that would have delighted the late Frederick Walker, and might be found in the outskirts of some old country town. In front there is a high railing of good old iron with a handsome gateway in the middle. Through the rails we can see the forlorn garden offering an air of "large desolation" and neglect, with a look of tranquil abandonment. The centre of this low block of buildings has a quaint cupola, or lantern rising from a pediment filled with decayed sculptures. At the side are two pretty little gates by which you can enter and walk round, and play "the contemplative man," past the low doorways, over which are faint characters with the name of a parish. A dim-faced clock gives hoarse and wheezy note of time; but there is no one to be seen.

Retracing our steps and crossing Victoria Street by "The Stores," we pass into Rochester Row. Near the Westminster end we come to a large old house of a delightful pattern, with vast inclosed gardens or grounds behind. This is the "Grey Coat" School, with a fine tiled roof, and central block with wings. Nothing can be better than the rare solid brick work—the air of comfort. Some directing Goths have, however, erected a barbarous sort of colonnade or passage exactly before the door of entrance, thus spoiling the effect of the façade. Everything is in excellent keeping, even to the high substantial wall round it. But the fair expanse of ground behind is coveted, and already a slice has been

taken off for a large factory.

In front there used to stand, not long since, another group of almshouses, which the worthy Palmer and Enery Hill, erst citizens of Westminster, had erected. These were pulled down, and an attempt has been made to erect something of the same *genre*, but with indifferent success. Cheap, economical brick work on Queen

Anne lines does not answer, and soon acquires a mean, squalid air owing to the amount of mortar used. Taken as they are, we must be grateful that these relics are left to us. These are certainly the best things of the kind to be found in London, and the lover of what is picturesquely antique will not find this little promenade unprofitable.

With this bonne bouche I conclude, for the present, my "Travels,"

and take my leave.

THE END.

AUNT JANE'S RELICS.

BY MARY BATHURST DEANE,

AUTHOR OF "S. BRIAVELS," "UNFORGIVEN," ETC.

THERE lie before me as I write a pile of faded morocco pocket-books, red, green, and brown, tied with ribbons to match. A little over a century ago "Aunt Jane" wrote her name in good round hand in the first of them. Some were given to her by "mama" some by "papa," others by "my aunt Zinzan." Had the daily record of her life been kept less fitfully, and more fully, we should have what could not fail to be interesting, a complete history of a young lady in her teens, showing what had changed, and what had not changed in English country life since the pleasant family party, long since laid to rest, gathered about the wood fires of Hartley Court, or rode through the streets of Reading.

And even as it is I could not help thinking that, aided by oral tradition and surrounded by objects that would if they could tell the whole story, I might put together a sketch of this family life that should carry with it some interest to those who desire to know something of the way in which their pre-

decessors lived.

It was the old and not the modern world in which Jane, her brothers and sisters lived—a world less crowded than the present one, and a great deal less noisy. We look beyond the vast forces that have taken possession of it since then, and get a glimpse of a calm rural life that seems like a haven of peace on the further side of a huge barrier of shrieking, tearing, whirling, rushing machinery. Here is a land threaded with electric intelligence, riddled with railway lines, showered with a white incessant fall of penny and half-penny postage, a world running to and fro, and eager to hear and to tell the last new thing.

There—jogged along the rumbling coaches, the horn blown perhaps for a couple of letters franked by members of Parliament, and three which cost the recipients at least eightpence a piece. Books issued slowly from the press, advertisements were unknown, the vast majority of the population stayed on the spot where they were born, feared the Pope, and looked up to the parson and squire. Very good times were those for parson and

squire, but for the people, England had long ceased to be "Merry England." Persecution of Church and State, begun by Tudors, carried on by Puritans, had stripped away every flower and fruit of mirth and left a reeling drunken population. Whose can put two and two together will find it writ clear in

the pages of English history.

The sharp-witted, eager, observant mechanic had not been called into existence. The peasants were as children—naughty children chiefly—but to be fed and treated and ruled indulgently by private benevolence, to be pressed for the navy, or India, and to be hanged for stealing forty shillings. Laws were too often horrible ghastly tyrannies to the poor. The champions of the weak, the giant-killers, were only just beginning the most glorious campaigns of the world.

The family of my heroine, who was a Berkshire beauty in her day, was not fast rooted to one spot, though never straying far

without the bounds of that pleasant county.

The pocket-books are dated from Hartley Court, which, however, was never a favourite residence of Jane's father; or from the old house in the Forbury, Reading, which stood within what had once been the garden of the old Abbey, whose picturesque ruined gateway was part of their property. They had also a house at Hythe, near Southampton, where the yacht "Eliza" was kept.

Jane's father was of a type which England can no longer afford to cultivate—a product too expensive to himself and to others. Suave, brilliant in conversation, a good classical scholar, a man of witty sayings and bright epigrams, a leader in local politics whose influence could return at least one of the members; a descendant of county families, and county families only; a keen sportsman; an authority in agricultural matters, being one of the founders of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society,—a "three-bottle" man, and a gambler! Look at the old county histories, and compare the names of the landowners with those in the chronicles of to-day. The old order changes without any revolution to precipitate matters; the old names die out and new ones succeed. The slow wheel of fortune brings the descendant of the Saxon serf to sit in the place of the ruined Norman. The Saxon is re-conquering England, because of the gambling houses, the race-course, and the three-bottle sittings of Georgian squires. The prodigal groweth lean and the diligent fat—facts patent in each generation to Jew and Gentile.

There existed, until the worm nibbled at it, a black and gold oval frame containing seven miniatures. These represented the father and mother, with their five children, of whom "Aunt Jane" was number two. The five children bore five plain old-fashioned names, Ann, Jane, John, Robert, and "Betsy." Boys and girls alike have their brown locks cut straight across the forehead and hanging loose to their shoulders. The girls are arrayed in spotted

muslin frocks, with gauze mob caps decked with white flowers and ribbon. Little Betsy, in the middle, has a blue sash, and has not attained to the dignity of a cap. The boys are in nankin suits, braided about the fronts; both wear frilled lawn collars, and the younger has a blue silk sash tied over his coat. It must have been severe discipline to Master Robert, who was a pickle of the old sort, to have to endure so much fragile smartness. There is another portrait of John, in oils, a nice grave-faced boy, in his Eton Montem dress, a scarlet coat, his hair in powder, with the towers of Eton in perspective.

Three of the five were destined to see very far-off lands before they ran out the last coil of the strand spun for them; but it is Jane who stopped at home, and did nothing, only waited and was patient, only suffered and made no complaint, only lived through a long quiet spoiled life as thousands of other women have done, around whom the warmest memories seem to

cling.

There is so little in those faded pocket-books of hers, that they recall but a shadow of the merry life that by-and-by was swept into dark rain-clouds; and yet it brings back a bit of real living, laughing, careless existence, a sheltered English home of the days when just across the Channel, the old order was being done away and the fire of the great Revolution being blown into flames. In the year 1784 there was a burst of rude laughter throughout the House of Commons, at the notion of a prime minister of twenty-four, but that was the last time the name of "William Pitt" was received with hilarious scorn.

Jane's father was a friend of the new premier, and she was brought up on political talk of the most intensely partisan nature. No house in those days was wide enough to hold two opinions.

In February Jane, who was then thirteen, states that she went to the "County Meeting, and signed the address." She does not mention what the important matter was which demanded a signature fresh from copy-book practice. She also "drank tea and suped with my aunt Matthias. Whent to church twise." It is perfectly sure that the excellent Miss Springett, who ruled in the schoolroom, did not look over her pupil's diary.

"I won my bet with my uncle Matthias, 2s. 6d. Bought an orange. Mama gave me an orange, 1½d." This refreshment must have been supplied when they were shopping in Reading. "For mending papa's stockings, 6d." That was a well-earned sixpence, for "papa's stockings" were long enough to roll up above the knee of a man six foot high, thick lustrous ribbed silk; and "papa" was terribly particular.

On a Thursday Jane and her sisters "took a ride in the chariot with Miss Springett;" on Friday, "took a ride in the chaise with mama and Ann. Drank tea with Mrs. Andrewes,

and spent a very agreeable evening."

"Mama gave me sixpence for behaving well. Played at cards and won 2s."

"Had a good deal of company. Lost 9d. at cards."

"Bought an orange 11d. Payed Mrs. Henip for washing a

tucker and pair of robings. Cards as usual."

Either the schoolroom was not permitted a share in the feast of good things detailed in the clear small writing of Jane's grandmother, through two vellum-bound volumes, or Jane had a passion for tarts not to be appeased by home cookery, for the next series of entries, with an arbitrary system of capital letters, is as follows:—"Tarts 2d.; Ribbon 1½d.; tarts 2d.; a doll 3d.; a grate for Betsy."

The wooden doll whose humble cost was 3d. had doubtless a long thin waist and painted fringe of hair; a few years later the waist was cut just below the arm-pits, and the fringe was curly. There was one of these eighty years later among old Aunt Jane's relics. Dolls always lag a trifle behind the fashions, but with an

attempt to keep up with the beau monde.

Jane next records that she "went to dancing," and that "papa and Mrs. Neville came home from London."

"Went with Mrs. Andrewes to see the Nomination for the

"Colonel Vansittart (the Tory candidate) dined here."

Then in triumph, "Colonel Vansittart and Mr. Pye gained their election." "Mr. Vansittart and Mr. Ravenshaw dined here."

There was a lingering memory of times when a standing army was looked upon as a national danger in the way in which mili-

tary titles were used, or omitted, as fancy dictated.

Jane next records that she spent 2d. on a "bow and arrow," and 1d. on some "gum ariaback," also that she stayed at home all day and was "very indifferent."

"Mr. Cobham and Colonel Stewart drank tea and spent the

evening at our house."

A few years later, when Colonel Stewart had become a general, and Jane's elder sister Ann was seventeen, this gentleman was possessed with the mistaken idea that she would make him a suitable wife. He had considerable property, and her father was of his opinion also. Ann, however, thought very differently, but after a great deal of pressing for her objections, declared that she had but two. "Perhaps," suggested the general, "they might be overcome." "That was unfortunately impossible," said the young lady. He persisted. "Then, if you will know, sir—you are too old and too ugly." For this daring impertinence Ann was locked up, on rations of bread and water, but owing to the good nature of the general, or to the charm of manner to which a gentleman, afterwards a peer and prime minister, succumbed, the naughty girl was forgiven, and in after years General Stewart

gave his name and promised his fortune to a son of hers, who, however, died of small-pox, in his childhood, in India.

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The little diary runs on, "Took a walk early in the morning, with 'Rush,' C. Howe, and Ann. Went to the cow to drink milk. Mr. Abercromby dined. Took a ride with papa, Mr. Abercromby, and John. Gave John 1s., Robert 6d., Pattiman 2d. Drank tea in the summer-house."

She paid a visit in London after this, but tells nothing about it.

She must have been in the country again, when she writes. "Rode on horseback with papa and Taylor." "Taylor dined with us." "Taylor went to Westminster."

In these bald statements lies the germ of the long and sole romance of Jane's life. Charles Taylor was a son of a well-known physician at Reading; a friend of her brothers, as one can see by his being called "Taylor" by her. In the Eton and Westminster holidays they were much together, a juvenile friend-ship of which no one foresaw the consequence.

Ann and Jane were more of horsewomen than girls at that date usually were, and many a long ride was stored up in Jane's memory, with other such passing sweet recollections, to shed light upon the grey lonesome years that closed quietly upon her afterwards. But now all is Maytime, youth "playing on a bank of sunny flowers;" no one looks beyond "next holidays," and the ruin to be brought by "papa's" visits to London, his nights at "Arthur's," is looming far in the distance.

In the pocket-book for 1784 is a list of the tunes for country dances, already altered from their original meaning, contredanse. To these sprightly airs figured the maidens in sprigged muslins and gauze caps, the powdered youths in knee breeches, and paste buckles.

The handsome and gallant dragoon who became the husband of saucy Ann rode seventy miles on one horse, in order to dance an evening through with her at a Reading "Assembly." This lover, who, like young Lochinvar, was "gallant in war, and constant in love," was more fortunate than another dragoon—the Charles Taylor of Westminster School—having fortune to back him in his suit; and his wooing went as gaily as the fiddles in the Reading ball-room, which twanged out the strains of "The Pleasures of Sproughton," "Prince William's Return," "Miss Bethell's Fancy," "Le Pulley's Whim," "The Attic Storey," "The Oakes Assembly," "The Enchanted Wood," "The Happy Meeting," "Lady Townsend's Fancy," "The Blazing Comet," "Prince of Wales' Delight."

Jane copies from a pack of fortune-telling cards a couplet, which doubtless struck her as a valuable bit of philosophizing:

[&]quot;Were you to get your own intent, In a short time you would repent."

At the end of the year she writes. "First Christmas that ever I dined without papa." That charming individual, for whom she ever retained a deep admiration, was detained in town. Every night in town meant a fresh cantle out of the family fortune.

1776 begins with quotations from Addison and winnings at cards, in friendly proximity; also she records a visit in the coach to Aunt Zinzan, who presented her with "a crown-piece for a

keepsake."

"Madam Zinzan" was a noted character in Reading. The old red-brick house, standing in gardens, from which she started every morning for the eight o'clock service at St. Mary's, in her double-caped cloak and pattern, with her maid carrying a lantern, has given place to "Zinzan Street," and "Zinzan Place." The family bearing that foreign name came first into England from Italy, in the reign of Henry VII. The representatives of it held some place about court throughout six reigns, and were entrusted with certain foreign missions. Among the scanty relics of their possessions is a fine portrait of Sir Sigismund, who was equerry to James I., and taught Prince Henry tilting; one of his son Henry, and another of the son's Dutch wife, Jacoba van Lore; also some fine damask table-cloths, bearing the royal cypher and crown of Henry VII. Upon one of these is portrayed the story of the prodigal son, the costumes in the early Tudor style, the swine large and well fed. Another, with napkins to match, was woven in honour of Prince Eugene, and shows forth Joshua commanding the sun to stand still. Tylehurst, in Berkshire, was the seat of the Zinzans until the reign of Charles II., when the head of the family was a boy of seventeen. It happened that some Italian workmen were employed in the hall, and on one unlucky day the heir and his mother were together, watching their proceedings and giving orders. Tradition does not say whether by misunderstanding or undue interference, or sheer impertinence, but one of these workmen affronted the lady, whereupon the boy drew his dagger and plunged it into the offender's breast. The blow was fatal, and the young heir was sent out of the country in all haste by his affrighted mother. She herself, poor lady, went to beg the king's pardon, but was told that it could not be granted before trial, so fearing to stand a trial, the young man never returned to England.

Out of the Zinzan vault in St. Mary's Churchyard grows a willow, completely overshadowing the grim altar tomb, and there sleeps Madam Zinzan, the last of that branch of the family, a grande dame, a Lady Bountiful, and one who expected to be much made of. This last trait was well known to her young

grand-nieces.

Ann writes to Jane from Mr. Sclater's, Tangier Park:

" DEAR JANE,

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"I hope to receive a letter from you to-morrow by the newsman. We have rode out every afternoon but yesterday. When we were ready to go, one of Mr. Sclater's cows gored Miss Sclater's horse, so that she could not ride him, and he is so old they are affraid he will not recover. I asked the horse doctor this morning how Dash was, and he says he mends a little. We dined at Mr. Mackreth's on Thursday last, and spent a most agreeable day. We went to Basingstoke on Tuesday, and as we were riding by Mrs. Chambers', I saw my grandmama and Mrs Basnet. We got off our horses, and I went with my grandmama to the Maidenhead Inn, where my aunt Zinzan was. She told me that she had been to Southampton, and that did not agree with her, so she went on to Limington. I suppose that agreed very well, for there she met some of her friends, and was taken notice of . . . I have finished my purse as mama desired, as much as I can do myself, and have sent it home in case my Aunt H. D. should come. Would be obliged to Miss Springett to finish it for me; also to mama, to present it to my aunt in my name, if I have not the pleasure of seeing her. Miss Sclater has lost a young Guinea fowl, and is now a-hunting for it. She has just been in to tell me to say that we agree very well, and are not tired with one another's company. I see William is just gone to saddle our horses to go to church. Miss Sclater rode a new horse to-day, and it carried her very well. I beg my duty, and Mr. and Miss Sclater's compliments to papa and mama, and love to you, Betsy, and my brothers. Adieu!

"Your affectionate sister

"ANN."

"I have just received your letter safe, and am much obliged to you for it. Tell mama that my yellow petticoat is full of little holes, and the stain shows through my frock quite frightful, and if she will let me have my white one to wear under my frock, I will only wear it when Miss Sclater tells me, as she is to have a Mrs. Russell to spend a day with her, who is a genteel dressy lady."

Dated October 30th, 1784, is a letter from Jane to a young friend of hers at Andover, the daughter of Sir Harvey Coombe.

Jane was just thirteen.

"DEAR MISS COOMBE,

"As you were so obliging to answer my last letter, I could not let our correspondance drop through, though I fear my scrawl affords you but little pleasure. The lecture you gave Ann in your last has prevailed on her to write. My aunt Matthias gave us the account of her journey, with real pleasure. I should have

wrote before, but waited for an opportunity of sending it. I am sorry to find that you are still such a strong friend to Mr. Fox, but hope when we have the pleasure of seeing you at Reading, we shall be all of the same opinion in politics, as I flatter myself it is the only thing we differ in. Now dear Miss Coombe, I must conclude, with love, and compliments from papa and mama, sisters and self,

"I remain your sincere and affectionate friend

" JANE."

The following letters were written to Jane, in the year 1785, when she was staying at Tangier Park:

" DEAR JANE,

"Being at my aunt Zinzan's this afternoon, my grand-mama desired I would write a few lines for her in answer to your last, with which she was much pleased, as was your aunt Zinzan. As for the excursion into Hampshire, it must be put off for a little while, as my aunt's coach is at the coachmaker's to be painted. You will hear further about it before they come. It is a chance whether I come or not. If I do, we shall sleep at Basingstoke. Papa will dine at the Aldermaston Club on Tuesday, from whence he talks of coming to Tangier. Mr. Fowler dined with us on Monday, and after dinner he and Mr. Sclater, Ann, and Charlotte Stowe, and myself took a long ride on horseback.

"Drury's horse is quite blind, so it is impossible to ride that one, but I have a most delightful one now, which belongs to my uncle Matthias. I am working Betsy's frock body in pleats, and to each pleat a row of pinstitch. It is almost finished, but is

monstrous tiresome.

"I have begun a little caddy in fillagree work, under the direction of Miss Sturges, who has just finished one, which is vastly admired. I have learnt a new hunting song of Miss Roebuck, who is now at the Stowes, and whom I like vastly. Our harpsichord is new tuned by a man from London, and is done very well indeed. I believe I was about the outline of Cokermouth Castle when you left us; it is now finished and I am doing one for its companion; when done, papa talks of sending them both to Mr. Garforth, the member for Cokermouth. Now I must conclude, as the tea-things are waiting for me to make tea."

In her next letter Ann sends a copy of verses, whose ambitious author was doubtless known to her sister. Having described them as "very pretty," underlined, Ann feels she has committed herself, and carefully scratches out the words, replacing them with strict propriety, with "the following" verses. They are given

as a specimen of the lines turned out by the aspiring youth of the day:

"The circling year again brings forth
The happy day which gave to Nancy birth,
May the propitious morn, with lustre rise,
And find thee still more happy and more wise.
May heaven guard thee with distinguished care,
And every blessing give to thee a share.
Make thee to tread secure in virtue's way,
And happy to thy latest natal day.
To moral virtues may your actions tend,
And heaven succeed the wishes of a friend."

" DEAR JANE,

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"I did not receive your letter by the newsman till Saturday, therefore, have not had time to get a three-pronged fork for you, but will get one the first day I go into the town.

"We are going to have the dolls' closet washed, therefore, I have taken Miss Jane into my possession till you return, for fear she should be broke. Miss Stowe is entirely destroyed.

"I am sorry to hear that you were taken for me, as I fear you will think it a very bad compliment.

"Mama's best compliments to Miss Sclater, and she is much obliged for the housewife."

There is a postcript from the mother. "I would have wrote to my dear Jane, but have quite fatigued myself with bustling, and hope she will excuse it till next week. Am very happy to hear such good accounts from you; your first letter was very well written. Observe, in your next, not to make so many capital letters, and spell know with a k, which you have twice omitted."

READING, May 7th, 1785.

" DEAR JANE,

"I am very sorry you are so affronted with me for not writing to you, as I certainly should have done, but waited till I had a good deal of news to tell you at once. First, I will tell you the joyful news that we got the Paving Bill by 17, on Monday last.

"All our party, as you may suppose, triumph much over the others, who appear quite chagrined. Mr. and Mrs. Boehn, with Maria and Harry Hessman, left Reading to embark for Germany, the day before yesterday. We had a learned dogg brought into the yard yesterday, which diverted us all very much. The man ordered the dogg to go and speak to the gentleman in company who was most fond of the ladies, and the dogg walked up to my cousin Tom and barked, which was his speaking, which to be sure brought the laugh of the whole company upon him. Charlotte Stowe drank tea with me yesterday, and we had a good many gentlemen of our party, Mr. Prince, Mr. Vanderstegen, and Mr. Osborne, besides papa, Mr. Sclater, and my cousin Tom. Mr. Valpy dined, but left before tea. Thursday, I drank tea with

Miss Sturges, and took a walk with them. My aunt Zinzan has asked mama to give me leave to accompany them to Basingstoke, which if granted, I will let you know what day, as I shall hope to meet Miss Sclater and yourself. To whom I beg my best compliments, and accept love yourself, as I must conclude, Mr. Sclater being now waiting for me to take a walk with the Stowes, where we shall take a dish of tea before we set off. We have had to dinner with us to-day two old fidgeting things of the name of Lane, who engage my papa at present in the parlour, drinking away. I hope you will drink Gabathia still, as it is not quite settled. Mr. Fowler drank tea and supped here one day; he is to dine here to-morrow; he asked after you. Excuse my saying any more at present than that I am yours, &c.

" ANN

"I assure you that if you are not tired of reading, I am of writing, therefore, adieu! I am very sorry for the accident mama's horse has met with, but I hope it may not prove as bad as Miss Sclater imagines, as I am sure he is in very able hands.

"Mrs. Springett has been so obliging as to send you a pincushion, which I have sent you, and have the fellow to it

myself.

"We all petition Mr. Sclater to stay, as we do not know what we shall do without him now. So no more now, madam; I am for the present, your ladyship's humble servant

"Anno Domini, '85."

In these summer evenings Jane and her friends would go out to listen to the beautiful singing of an evening hymn by the regiment afterwards known as the "Black Brunswickers," which was

encamped just outside Tangier Park.

Young as the sisters were, their life, as Jane briefly records it, appears to be a constant dining out, playing cards, and seeing "much company," but their governess Miss Springett was still teaching them, although the daily lessons were not accounted worthy of note. But what struck Jane as worth recording is, that the number 555 drew £1,000 in the English lottery that year. Lotteries were then under state protection, and advertised in all the papers. Then follow a couple of domestic tragedies:

"The cat killed my little bird in the schoolroom. Elizabeth's bird died a natural death." She forfeits a halfpenny to Betsy, gives a beggar a penny, spends 6d. on oranges, and soon after they go to Bath, where they put up at the "White Lion," the toasting "Gabathia" having succeeded. She gives 6d. for steel pins, 2d. for a glass vial, and 6d. for a print and frame, but has nothing to say about the gay little city. The Bostocks were there, no doubt in lodgings in Milsom Street, with their roomy pew at the Octagon Chapel, containing a fireplace and made snug

with red curtains. It was exactly "The Bath" of "Northanger

Abbey" and "Persuasion."

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From Bath Jane went on a visit to some cousins at Warmley in Gloucestershire, the handsome son of which family afterwards married her sister Ann, and eventually took her out to India. His father dying this year he became master of Warmley House. Jane had nothing to record about this visit except that she "gave 8s, to the maids."

1787, "January 3rd. Ball at home, the most charming evening I ever spent in my life." Jane, although only sixteen, was now introduced into society, and a list of balls follows this one. Doubtless the Cousin Charles of Warmley House and Charles Taylor, just waiting for his commission, were present at this most charming evening of Jane's life. Being now emancipated from the schoolroom she swings "all the morning;" another day she spends "a most delightful pleasant morning with the Stowes," and reports "an uncommon fogg."

Her accounts are, "Gave a distress'd woman 1s. For a bul-

finch 1s. 2d. For calling her father 1s."

Then Charles Taylor dines with them, and she describes the first cotillion ball at Reading as a very good one. These little county balls were, for many years later, even when Ann's sons were grown up, and figured at them, so exclusive that only "Manor House people" were admitted. Even the daughters of rectors were only eligible if they were staying at the squire's house, a matter of course of frequent arrangement.

Jane went up to London in the Spring, saw "the Exhibition," the predecessor of the Royal Academy, ate ices at Groom's, and went to see the company go to court. She paid a visit at Kensington Palace, was taken to Ranelagh, which she found very crowded, these being still its palmy days, and afterwards stayed with her uncle and aunt Bostock, at Windsor, Dr. Bostock being

vicar and canon.

At one of the usual evening whist parties, Dr. Davies, head master of Eton, being one of the players, Jane went behind the chair of this dignified personage, and took an opportunity of saying, "If you please, sir, to-morrow is my brother John's birthday,

may he and John Sumner have a holiday?"

"No, no, certainly not," was the gruff response, then the sly old gentleman glanced round. "What, Miss Jane! I can refuse nothing to such a pretty girl," so the Bostocks' two nephews—one of whom eventually became Archbishop of Canterbury, the other, who died a judge at Benares just too soon to be made a director of the East India Company—had their holiday together, as they had many another at Beenham and Reading.

Being at home again Jane writes in the little red pocket-book, "Mr. Blagrave's horse Merryandrew is beaten by Prodigal." She rides to the course with Mr. Blagrave and a cousin, stays at

Tangier Park, Shinfield, and Popham Lane. This was English country life at its very best, before London, the all-absorbing, had drawn off the sparkle, leaving only the dregs of the wholesome beverage of country pleasures. People went to the balls to dance and enjoy themselves; shooting parties were for men who could shoot, and battues were unknown. Real friends were made in country-house visiting, which had not become as much a conventional treadmill as the London season itself. Neighbours met to be amused and not, of necessity, to be bored. Conversation and manners were cultivated, as society required among gentle people. Young men used to flock round Jane's father to hear his brilliant talk, and his daughter Ann had the same talent to the last.

Every Sunday there was "company" to tea and supper. One day Jane rode into Reading with her father, who took her into a house she did not know, telling her he had something to show her. There, to her surprise and pleasure, she saw a life-sized portrait of her papa, in his green, silver-buttoned shooting coat, his favourite sporting dog looking up at him with faithful gaze, and his favourite gun, a light fowling-piece which had belonged to a French lady, over his shoulder. In the background was a good bit of landscape, and by his side a group of dead game. Jane was delighted; she knew not only the good-looking face and neat powdered hair, but every seal in the hanging bunch, not to speak of gun and dog. The artist died young and unknown, but had he lived he would undoubtedly have rivalled Gainsborough; his colouring was excellent, and the only deficiency in the drawing is in the figure, giving one to suppose that his sitter found it too much trouble to give him sittings, except for the head. The green coat is palpably filled with stuffing, and not a human body.

The shooting season beginning. "Lord Ashbrook, Captain Shepperd, Captain Pye, and Mr. Blagrave breakfasted and shot with papa." Also the pocket-book notices, "My mother went to Ealing by the machine at 10 o'clock;" the machine being a public conveyance. "My father to Ascot with Lord Ashbrook and Mr. Blagrave." Next, the whole party went to Ascot together, and dined at Binfield, after which they went to see a performance of "The Beggar's Opera," whose popularity lasted for well-nigh a century. "Treated the cook to the play 2s,"

writes Miss Jane. "Played Batt and Ball."

The gentlemen went to Bulmarsh Heath to shoot pigeons. "C. Taylor came to tea, gave me a thread housewife." Was that among the innumerable "housewives" found among "Aunt Jane's wondrous collections of trifles? Did a certain horde of children pounce upon that once-treasured keepsake, ignorant of the story it could tell?"

"My brother rode to Henley with C. T. My father and brother

dined at the 'Boar' at Reading with friends. Bought a horse for

my mother."

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Here follow a number of sentimental extracts, copied into the sometimes confidential pocket-book. There they are in the faded ink of a hundred years ago. At Southampton races Jane saw the Prince of Wales, then in all the brilliancy of his florid youth. "Walker the Philosopher," she mentions, "came to Reading, and had tea with us."

In 1788 the marriage of Ann with her second cousin, Charles Meredith D., took place. They proved a devoted couple, but great adepts at spending money, in consequence of which Charles was compelled to sell his property while a captain in the 24th

Light Dragoons.

This year Jane was apostrophized by an admirer, who filled a sheet of foolscap with praises of the Belles of Reading, as "lovely, modest, and retiring."

In 1791 John sailed for India in "the Kent," the whole family assembling in town to see him off; but little thinking that this

was to prove their last earthly farewell to him.

He rose rapidly in the H.E.I.C.S., and after Lord Lake's campaign was appointed commissioner, in conjunction with Sir Edward Colebrooke, for the ceded and tributary North-West Provinces. His sister Ann accompanied him in the state progress for receiving the homage of the native princes, for the English sovereign. His health failing, he retired with what was a moderate fortune for a man in his position, and died when upon the point of embarking for England.

A notice of his death appeared as follows in the Times,

1818.

"Our last accounts from Bengal, we are concerned to state, bring intelligence of the death of Mr. John D—many years one of the commissioners for the ceded and conquered Provinces, to whose mental and personal exertions the East Indian Company are chiefly indebted for an immense increase of revenue, and for the organization of their most valuable possessions in Hindostan.

"This gentleman was possessed of every qualification to constitute a statesman, and every virtue to adorn a man; in him society has lost one of its most valuable members, and the government of India one of its most able and zealous supporters. He was at once the friend of the oppressed native and faithful servant of his employers: of him it may be truly said, he was too

honest to be rich."

Next to the mention of John's departure is the simple statement, "Had my ears box'd." Not a word about who box'd them, but a thing to be darkly recorded and ever remembered. She was taken to the new opera house, and to see "Dibden's Oddities;" also to the "Temple of Flora." There was no great variety in the entertainments of London in those days. On their return

into Berkshire they started at twelve o'clock, dined at Maidenhead, and reached Reading at eight.

"Lady Leith and Mr. Blagrave staying with us. Visible eclipse

of the sun. Gave 4d. for poppy ribbon."

In 1792 she was taken to see the camp on Bagshot Heath. This was the year in which Burke was doing his utmost to create alarm throughout Europe by writings, "whose extravagance of

style was forgotten in their intensity of feeling."

He sent his son to join the French Emigrant Princes, encouraging them to take up arms against the Republic. The French Revolution was the topic in every English household which was in communication with the world. It was the last term of Pitt's power, for he alone had stood out against declaring war with France, and now France declared war with England.

But "Aunt Jane," instead of relating the effect upon her of the sight of England's great military preparations, puts down that she "spent a penny on gingerbread." She was then staying with the Bostocks at Beenham House; her friends, Ann and Dorothy Stowe, were much with her. Dr. Bostock held three livings, and although he was too delicate, suffering constantly from asthma, to do more than preach an occasional sermon, he kept them on principle, "because they had been committed to his charge," and spent more than he received from them upon the three curates he appointed. From such pluralists as these the Church of England would reap much advantage.

He was fond of art; his nephew, Archbishop Sumner, used to mention his paintings with admiration. Every summer he had an artist to stop at Beenham, to whom he paid a guinea a week for the advantage of watching his work, and whose pictures he

bought afterwards.

There is a story told concerning the canon when he was a sickly child of seven. His father, who was vicar of Windsor before him, was walking one day round the old church with the sexton. "Why do you never bury between those buttresses, Dibble?" the vicar asked.

"Well, d'ye see, sir," replied the old man, "'tis a comfortable sunny corner, and the truth is I'm keeping it for Master Johnny." "Master Johnny," as time proved, lived to be between seventy

and eighty, the proverbial "creaking hinge."

It was to Beenham that Ann's three children were sent from India. In the garden, fighting the espaliers valiantly as Ajax, the younger boy smashed the agate-handled dagger that had belonged to Sir Sigismund Zinzan. After the fashion of the day, Mrs. Bostock kept her old china in a little room called "the china closet," to be displayed to her lady-guests after dinner, while the male part of the company were settling down to their second bottle. Another small room was known as the "wiggery,' in which the canon's wigs were kept, each on its own stand.

The mention of the "second bottle" must not be taken to imply that Beenham rivalled Hartley Court in its after-dinner symposium. It was a day when the royal princes, as well as other gentlemen, went to balls the worse for wine, as Miss Burney relates, but sobriety was the rule in the house of the conscientious and refined Dr. Bostock.

When Ann's younger son was about sixteen, he had a school friend to spend the day with him at Beenham. It was a hot summer day, and the butler brought out to the summer-house in the wilderness some of his own special home-brew as a treat to the young gentlemen. Generally speaking, none but his particular friends were privileged to try its strength. Having enjoyed it thoroughly the boys returned to the house, but on their way thither eyed one another suspiciously.

"A-, you have had quite enough of that ale, I should advise you to drink no wine at dinner," said one friend.

"I was just going to make the same remark to you, D—," replied the other. They were wise enough to take one another's advice, agreed to speak as little as possible, and sat quiet and silent through dinner, refusing all offers of wine.

When the elder guests had departed, Mr. Bostock addressed his nephew. "I was very much pleased to observe your conduct, and that of your friend, at dinner, B—. Modesty in the company of their elders, and sobriety, are not to be seen often enough in young men." He augured well of the future, and perhaps would have been in the same mind had he known the private cause of the phenomenon.

To return to Jane and her morocco books.

The book of 1793 is "the gift of my Aunt Zinzan." "Gave to charity 2s. 6d. A free gift 1s. The Dutchess of Athole and Lord Charles came to tea. C. T. called. Drank tea at Dr. Taylor's, and met a party of nineteen." Twenty guests made up "a party" at that time; dancing required more room than it does now, and if cards were played a limited number was a necessity.

Robert, the younger of Jane's brothers, was now a cadet of Woolwich, and there are extant a couple of his letters, which illustrate the Woolwich of that date, in an amusing manner.

Woolwich, March 10th, 1792.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

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"We had a proper row with the townspeople yesterday afternoon. Some of them insulted two of the cadets. We chased them about three miles and back again into the town, and in the evening, about twenty great men, with amazing large clubs and stones, besides a hundred boys, pelting great stones as big as cricket balls, attacked about ten of us, in the Rope walk. We drew our swords and formed a line, and they cried 'Surround them!' Upon which we wheeled backward on the left, where

we had a heap in our rear, so that they could not come behind us. Then we attacked them, cut one man's hand, another's shoulder, and stabbed another, and in a quarter of an hour, gained a complete victory. They did not think we should have been so resolute, as the company is in general very small, but they found the difference, for we stood by one another, and they called a truce; and well they did, for if they had stood any longer, every soul of them would have been cut to pieces.

"There has not been such an engagement for this long time. One of the cadets has his face and eye cut open with a stone, and that is all the injury we have received. I have filled my paper, and therefore will conclude with duty to my relatives and com-

pliments to my friends, and am, my dear mother, "Your dutiful son,

" ROBERT."

WOOLWICH, April 3rd.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"I have received all your letters and things which you have sent me, and for which I am much obliged, but am sorry you should have such an opinion of me as to think I am in the Black Hole. And as for Betty, I shall give her a trimming in the summer, for if I had deserved it you may depend upon it I should have been there by this time, as they are more strict now than ever. Pownay is come, and seems to like it very well. I don't doubt his getting on in the Academy, because he is steady. I daresay I shall make a very good neux (fag?) of him, as he is willing to do his duty. To make it easier for him I make the neuxes, but one and him, take it week and week about, as I would not like him to do all, and it would be very partial to make the other do it . . . I am very sorry you should think that we went out with intent to kick up a row, as we only did it for our own safety, and as for my sword being taken away, it is all barum. I called on the Speaker" (Addington) "when I was in town last week, but he was not at home. As I am confident that I have never abused his patronage, I don't doubt his being glad to see me . . . I had a pleasant party on the water on Sunday last with some more cadets, and had another encounter, alias "row," with the sailors of a sloop which was lying in the river. They were exceedingly saucy and impertinent, so we went on board and thrashed them, alias, gave them the rope's end in style, till we made them very peaceable, and then came off in our fouroared boat victorious, and had an exceedingly pleasant afternoon, and all for sixpence."

In 1793 the family was staying in their house at Hythe near Southampton, chiefly occupied in sailing up and down the river in their yacht, the "Eliza." The great flag of the "Eliza" used

to be set up on the lawn of Hythe, and under it used to assemble nautical and other heroes, to drink confusion to England's enemies, until some notably old Admiral Parry had to be borne away, corpse fashion, by his gig's crew.

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In '95 the naval victory over the French, known as the "Glorious First of June" took place. The English Fleet, with its five prizes, came sailing with tattered sails into Southampton Harbour, and Jane was taken by her father on board the ship that carried Admiral Howe's flag, before the blood-stains were well cleared from the deck.

This was the year that witnessed the end of Warren Hastings' seven years' trial. The ex-Governor-General was a friend of the family's, and Jane preserved one of his visiting cards among her relics. While staying with the Bostocks at Windsor, she attended his trial. So great a mob of ladies and gentlemen in court dress thronged the entrance that carriages had to be left in close files along Parliament Street, while their occupants struggled on foot to Westminster Hall. A crowd without police! It is a wonder they were not torn in pieces before the ushers within the hall could get them into their proper places.

On one of these occasions Jane got separated from her party, finding herself in the alarming position of being alone in a surging throng of London's whole fashionable world. A gentleman observed the dilemma of 'the pretty young girl, and asked if he could be of use to her. She mentioned her father's name, whereupon he exclaimed, "What, the daughter of my old friend John D— of Reading!" and with friendly gallantry, pioneered her to the block of seats in which the rest of her party were anxiously wondering what had become of her.

This year her visit to Windsor was a long one, and Charles Taylor, who was possibly quartered there, was constantly with her.

She records more than once being "much entertained with sacred music." She went to the play several times, and saw a great deal of Sumners, Howards, and other friends. 8d. for a letter from Southampton reminds one that letters were paid for at so much the mile, and that etiquette forbade prepayment. In Jane's diary occurs occasionally, "Asked (so-and-so) for a frank."

Charles Taylor escorted her to Hythe, a memorable journey for the pair, of which Jane says little and thinks the more. Her next entry is, "Mr. Taylor left us."

It was at this juncture, probably, that Jane's little ship went down, and in the midst of the tragic theme of unwritten tradition comes the perverse matter-of-fact note, "Gave 2s. for a pound of hair powder. Bought some songs," &c.

It must have been about this time that the young dragoon declared the love that had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, and Jane and he were calmly sacrificed upon the paternal altar. The match was not good enough for poor

Jane, and expensive tastes, including evenings at "Arthur's," by which so many estates had changed hands, left little for a daughter's dowry. There was left to Jane a little reflected light from the lives of others, and a rare rare letter from her lost lover. For the father, whose hand had crushed their hopes, was the gaming table, the yacht, his barge on the river at home, where the punch-bowl went round in the cabin and his band of French horns made melody on deck. There was hunting, shooting, and political excitements. There were cakes and ale for him as long

as he lived, and after him-ruin.

Dainty, delicate Jane, the belle of the county balls, was as brave-hearted and generous as became one of an ancient fighting race. She gave her love, once and for all, to the companion of the days when all days were merry and mirthful, and never married; but Charles Taylor, although he never forgot his earliest and deepest love, did, in a few years time, take a wife, and when he left her and their only son, to go in command of his regiment to the Peninsular War, it was to Jane he commended them, and as long as they both lived they were the objects of her unremitting kindness.

By this time an end had come to the father's jovial career; he had fallen in the grip of his old enemy, gout, and Jane and her

mother were left together.

Hartley Court was shut up, and the two ladies took a house at

Southampton.

It was here that the most curious incident of Jane's life occurred. It was one of those dream experiences which are rare, as single-hearted devoted love is rare, and yet most people have known of something of the kind in the course of their lives.

Jane came down to breakfast one morning, looking pale and disturbed. In answer to her mother's inquiries she said she was well, but afterwards being left alone with a cousin who was staying with them, the latter said, "Now, Jane, what is the matter? Something has happened."

"Charles Taylor is dead," was the quiet answer.

"But how can you have heard? There is no mail in."

"I dreamt," said Jane, "that I saw a detachment of the 20th Light Dragoons, headed by Charles Taylor, riding through a wood. I heard shots, and he fell from his horse dead."

"Dear Jane, to prove that this was nothing but a dream, remember that they never send cavalry into a wood."

"He is dead-shot dead," was Jane's only answer.

Fast as a sailing-ship could carry it came the news of the battle of Albuera, and with it the tidings of the death of the gallant colonel of the 20th, just as Jane had seen it. It was said by his brother-officers that Taylor placed no value upon his life, but rather seemed to court danger, and the last instance of this was when he himself led a small handful of his men in pursuit of

the flying enemy, when the English were masters of the field. They got entangled in a small wood, fell into an ambush, and at the first fire of the Frenchmen, Colonel Taylor, who was in advance, fell mortally wounded.

It was only a dream, yet Jane saw the last of the hero of her life's story, as plainly as though she had been in bodily presence

on the spot.

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Just as it has been handed down, this oral tradition is now written for those who believe that there are sympathies as well as powers in the immortal spirit, of far wider reach than come ordinarily within our ken, but which from time to time are manifest, for fear we should forget that the spirit can soar beyond the bondage of the body.

With this ends the story of great aunt Jane. Time went on and left her the last of her generation, living in a house in Castle

Street, Reading.

A little later and she was laid beside father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, in a vault in St. Mary's churchyard.

Packed away in corner and cupboard, crowded into every available space in the house, came to light at last the accumulations of the long life, the relics of by-gone days, kept faithfully for old sake's sake.

There was the crimson brocade worn at Court by her mother; there was a heap of worked 'muslin and lace-trimmed gauze gowns, cut in the wonderful fashion of the "classic" revival, with the waist under the arm-pits; there was the quilted calash, big enough to contain a powdered head and feathers; there was the satin spencer, the plum-coloured tippet, the low silk slippers, and long "leather" gloves, the immense Brandenberg bonnet, the green silk umbrella with carved ivory handle, things curious in painstaking needlework, embroideries begun but never finished, and so on and so on in heaps, and bundles, and boxes, once everyday wear, now objects of curiosity and amusement. Satin shoes with the highest smallest heels ever made, quantities of long ribbed silk stockings, and the paste buckles worn with them. Waistcoats of rich silk velvet and silver, the very green coat, or its ditto, in which the father's portrait was taken. Lace in quantities; fans, from the long-handled one of Queen Charlotte's court to the tiny painted ivory of republican taste; purses, from the finest Delhi work to the home-made silk; weapons of different countries and various dates; china, from the old Worcester set, a wedding present to Jane's great grandfather, to the Oriental set which had a story of its own. Her uncle Matthias, through a friend who was going out in command of a vessel, sent to China an order for a tea and breakfast set, with his arms upon it. The description of the arms was given in heraldic terms, instead of being painted, whereupon the Chinese very naturally sent back the set, with faithful copies of these mysterious words, "gules,

argent, &c.," printed with the lines connecting the colours with the charges on each cup and saucer. It was a pity that some of these were not kept, but all were returned, and another set were made, with the arms properly emblazoned. It is believed, however, that these were painted at the Coalport manufactory. Aunt Jane's treasures were, to be brief, countless and inexhaustible; they were the most nondescript salvage from the wreck of a family ever got together. There were desks and work-boxes by the dozen, and odd discoveries were made in them, such as spade guineas in a secret drawer. The trinkets could each have told a little story, no doubt, and there were whole life stories strung with a bunch of wedding rings tied up together. There was the ribbon stamped in gold, "Rose and Royalty," to celebrate an election; there was a pincushion marked in wire-headed pins, "R.D. 1796;" there was a white gauze ribbon, woven in honour of the marriage of Princess Charlotte with Prince Leopold, ornamented with two hearts skewered together under a crown. Had certain relics, preserved for several generations, of Tovey Dwho raised a troop for King Charles, fallen into Jane's hands, doubtless they would have been still in existence; these were the boots that loyal Cavalier wore at Worcester fight, but they got to be playthings to Jane's grandfather and his young brothers, and were stamped to bits in the garden of Waltham St. Lawrence. A less heroic memento was a huge teapot of Oliver Cromwell ware, with a silver spout, in which green tea punch used to be brewed for the meetings of a jovial and select club which met at the house of Mr. Dodd, member for Reading. When that gentleman died, and his effects were to be sold, the squire of Hartley Court gave orders that the teapot which had adorned so many merry meetings should be bought for him at any price. As each of the other members had wished, as it turned out, for the same memorial, the price ran up to seven guineas, but it was carried off in triumph to Hartley.

Horace Walpole mentions the death of this Mr. Dodd. "We started in life together, but he took to one element, and I to

another," was the remark of the water drinker.

The great teapot had had its day, and so had the rouge-pots, the snuff-boxes, and patch-boxes of "Aunt Jane's" wonderful hoards. But closing her own life story in a fitting manner, one respectful act remained to be done. Apart from other papers was found a packet of letters, tied up with black ribbon, and written upon, "To be burnt unread after my decease."

The hand and heart from which these letters had been sent lay at rest under Spanish skies; and so to the flames and perpetual silence were committed these last links of faithful hapless

love.

The old house in the Forbury, which rang with the voices of five children, has gone; upon its site, and over the gardens where Jane and the Westminster schoolboy walked together on summer days, stand Sutton's huge seed-emporium and nursery gardens.

To few of those who knew the slender upright form of the quiet old lady of Castle Street, with her courteous manners, and listened to tales of her high spirit, as when to a hectoring attorney she replied, "Sir, I have never been afraid of a man in my life, and I am too old to be afraid now," to few of those was known the romance that ended only with her life—or, may we not think, was too good and bright a jewel to be laid aside with the worn garments of the flesh!

Row softly as you pass by such quiet barks, drifted ashore, for they have borne their freight of hopes that came to nothing; of joys gone like dead leaves; of sorrows, over which the stream of life has rolled; they have had their bright days and dark nights, though their sails are furled now and their flag pulled down, even like the threadbare flag of the "Eliza" among "Aunt Jane's

Relics."

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"
"A CRACK COUNTY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

PART II.

3.—THE MAN WHO BLOWS HIS OWN TRUMPET.

MOST of us are acquainted with the man who blows his own trumpet. Taking a comprehensive glance round the hunting field, there is generally no difficulty whatever in selecting one or two fairly representative specimens, who thoroughly understand the somewhat egotistical art of glorifying themselves at the expense of their neighbours. As a matter of fact they are not scarce, and exist in considerable numbers.

Their music, however, varies. Some men blow their own particular trumpet in such a subtle, refined and artistic manner that it scarcely offends the ear, whilst others play the favourite instrument so loudly and clumsily that the distracted listener

flies, overcome with disgust.

Taken as a rule, the great bulk of musicians are not much liked by their comrades. Nine times out of ten the deeds of valour which they proclaim so stentoriously, are chiefly imaginary, and

are known by the field to possess a fabulous origin.

If hounds have had an extra good run, it is a foregone conclusion that, according to the man who blows his own trumpet, nobody has seen anything of it except himself and, perhaps, the huntsman. In his bumptious, loud-voiced way, he narrates how he jumped some place, hitherto considered as unjumpable, and so secured a start whilst all the hard riders of the hunt were coasting up and down. Being never caught again he led every yard of the way. By Jove; yes, every yard!

And in that week's *Field* and sporting papers there will probably appear a highly-coloured account of Mr. X.'s exploits. Nobody knows how they became chronicled, or why he alone, out of all the field, should have his doings published and lauded up to the skies. Mr. X. himself, when bantered on the subject, professes entire ignorance, but is willing to discuss it with great good

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humour. He has an amiable weakness for seeing his name in print, but vows that the writer of the account in question is a perfect stranger to him.

Nevertheless the observant, and possibly the envious, remark that whenever a representive of the Press puts in an appearance at covert side, the man who blows his own trumpet treats him with great civility and distinction, brings forth his instrument, and plays some out-of-the-way fine flourishes upon it. A stranger is naturally impressed, and, not knowing the gentleman's idiosyncracies, accepts his statements in good faith. Several of Mr. X.'s personal experiences are so remarkable—at least, when told by himself-that if he did not repeatedly vouch for their truth, you would have considerable difficulty in believing them to be veracious. For instance, there is the story of how Mr. X. swam a river a quarter of a mile broad, and reached the opposite side, firmly seated on his saddle, just in time to dismember the fox in the absence of the huntsman and the entire field. Also the tale of how he cleared a canal, tow-path and all, which lurked unsuspected on the far side of a hedge, and which jump, when measured very carefully next day, proved to be no less than thirty-six feet And then there is the gallant incident of his jumping two railway gates in succession on his way to covert, rather than wait for the train to pass, and so arrive late at the meet.

Unfortunately for Mr. X., he is unable to produce any eyewitnesses in support of his assertions. They have all either died, gone abroad, or disappeared. As a rule, they die. But there is no fear of the younger generation forgetting our friend's feats of They hear about them much too often. If only the man who blows his own trumpet could be persuaded not to talk so incessantly and exclusively about himself, people would be much more ready to give him credit for his performances, which if not brilliant, are fair. As a rule, he is too greatly taken up with his own doings to have a good eye for a country, and therefore is quite incapable of cutting out the work over a stiff line of fences. But he will jump where other people jump, and is generally there, or thereabouts. The pity is that by some strange hallucination of the brain, pleasing to himself, but not to others, he invariably imagines in every run that he has had the best of it, and frequently irritates his friends by exclaiming in a patronizing tone:

"Hulloa! my dear fellow, where were you in that gallop? I

missed you altogether. Never saw you once."

Not unfrequently he meets with a richly-deserved rejoinder, but the trumpet-blower has no sense of shame, and reproof rolls off him like water from a duck's back. His self-complacency wraps him round in an impenetrable garment, and there is something almost sublime in his unassailable serenity. Laugh at

him as you please, he is a most happily constituted individual, and always on good terms with "number one."

Mr. X. rarely jumps the smallest fence without cantering up to

some of his acquaintance, and saying:

"God bless my soul, sir! did you see what an extraordinary bound my horse made over that place? Gad! but he must have

cleared close upon thirty feet."

"I am very sorry," comes the contemptuous, sneering, or indifferent rejoinder, according to the mood of the speaker; "but really I have not a pair of eyes at the back of my head, and even were I so fortunately constituted, I doubt whether I could succeed

in keeping them perpetually fixed upon you."

"Ah!" returns our friend X. with compassionate good humour, for, to give him his due, it takes a great deal to put him out of temper, and thanks to his peculiar organization, sarcasm is nearly always lost upon him. "Poor chap; I forgot how short-sighted you are. What a misfortune it must be, to be sure. You miss so much."

"One's deuced glad to miss some things."

"Ha, ha; just so, just so. But about my new horse, I tell you he's a ripper."

"Very likely. I never knew you possess one that you did not

say the same of."

"Ah! but this animal is something quite out of the way. He

is such an astonishingly big jumper."

His comrade casts a critical glance at the gallant creature, who is said to have cleared nearly thirty feet, when certainly six would have sufficed. Such lion-hearted hunters are not be met with every day, as he very well knows, and they inspire respect.

"Where did you pick him up, X.?" he inquires with some show of interest, for rare is the sportsman not willing to plunge into a discussion about a horse, even on slight provocation.

"I bought him from Northbridge. You know Northbridge, don't you? A little fellow with a yellow face and black moustache."

"Yes; a deuced hard man to hounds."

"Do you really think so? He has shocking bad hands, and could no more ride this horse than a child. He was always in difficulties, so one day, when I saw that he was particularly unhappy and ill at ease, I went up to him and made him a very handsome offer for his mount, which he accepted on the spot. That's the way to do business. The horse was quite thrown away upon Northbridge, but he's worth his weight in gold to a man with good hands."

"Meaning yourself, I suppose, eh?"

"Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. See how quietly he goes with me. I can do exactly what I like with him."

"Ah!" says his companion ironically. "But then we're not

all such accomplished horsemen."

But if our worthy friend draws the long-bow out hunting, when actually surrounded by all the dangers of oxers, bullfinches and stake-bound fences, he waxes a thousand times more eloquent when the excitements of the day are safely over and he reclines in a comfortable armchair by his own fireside. His imagination then leaps over every obstacle, and scoffs at the narrow boundaries imposed by truth. There is no need now to bridle either his tongue or his fancy, and when let loose one flows on as vivaciously as the other.

He makes his poor young wife's flesh positively creep with the stirring recital of the heroic deeds he has performed, and the extraordinarily narrow escapes he has had from breaking his neck or his back, maining himself permanently, or disfiguring his good looks, which he esteems very highly, whilst pretending a superb

and manly indifference for them.

They have not been married very long, and the foolish creature believes in him still as next door to a Deity. Every morning as he goes forth to the chase, in all the brave array of scarlet coat and snowy breeches, her timid heart beats fast with pangs of horrible apprehension, as she looks tearfully up into his great, healthy, rosy face.

"Oh, Tommy, darling," she exclaims imploringly, "do be careful, if not for your own sake for mine. Remember that you

are a married man now."

"You little goose! Am I likely to forget it?"

"Perhaps not. I hope not; but really, Tommy, dear, it always seems to me that you are so very, very rash. Surely it cannot be necessary for you to go out of your way to jump these tremendously big places, especially when nobody else, from your account, dreams of running the same risk."

He laughs in a lordly, patronizing manner—for her upbraidings are sweet incense to his vanity—kisses her fair cheek, and says

reproachfully:

"Dearest, you are too fond—too anxious. You would not have your Tommy a coward, would you, or show the white feather when hounds run? No, no, that is not his nature."

She casts an admiring glance up at him through her tears. "My own," she says in a voice choked with emotion, "all I ask is, that you should not be quite—quite so horribly brave. Every time you go out hunting I am miserable until I get you

safely back again."

He gives her another hug—this style of conversation, especially when carried on before the butler and footman is extremely agreeable—then rides gallantly away, and returns at evening primed with a series of adventures even more astounding than those he has hitherto recounted.

The hounds found. There was a ghastly piece of timber, at least six feet high. Certain death stared you in the face if your horse failed to clear it. Death! Aha! what was that to him—to any brave and resolute man? Others might shirk it if they liked, but he would sooner meet with his end than despise himself as a "funkstick." No, never should it be said of him that he had turned away from any mortal thing. The fellows were all hanging round and hesitating. Gad! the sight made his blood boil. It was more than he could stand. He crammed his hat down on his head, took his feet out of the stirrups, and—

"And—oh! what, Tommy? You do frighten me so," gasps the

poor little woman.

"And by an extraordinary miracle got over. Only man who did. Not another one would follow."

"I should think not, indeed," says his wife with a sob of relief

and terror.

"The young fellows now-a-days are a poor lot," he continues disparagingly. "They haven't half the spirit of we married

men."

"Perhaps that's because your wives render you desperate." And with these words she falls upon his neck and kisses him, and vows that never, never was there such a daring, foolhardy, but altogether delightful personage as her Tommy. Only it will not do for him to go on in this reckless and quixotic fashion. His life is far too precious, ever so much too precious.

If he has no regard for it himself, and risks it needlessly every day, at least he might remember how dear it is to other people—that they would be simply miserable if anything were to happen to him, &c., &c. As for courage, it is downright wicked to carry personal bravery to such an extent. Why! A Gordon is a joke

to him, and so on, and on.

Tommy sits in his armchair, stretches out the long manly limbs that he so wilfully endangers, and listens with the utmost complacence to all this innocent tirade. It is an hour of unmitigated enjoyment to him, and he cannot refrain from throwing in a few picturesque additions every now and then, which still further increase Mrs. Tommy's fears for his safety, and exalt him almost to a demi-god in her estimation.

In his wife's presence he has no hesitation in blowing the trumpet with loud clarion notes, to which every fibre of her

sensitive being responds.

And uncommonly pleasant he finds the process, with a pretty, adoring little woman as listener, who never detects a false chord and goes into raptures over even his most fantastic flourishes. It is a great temptation to perform loudly and frequently, and he makes no effort to resist the insidious pleasure.

She is his; why should he not impose upon her love and her

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credulity? The one is as sweet to him as the other, for they flatter his self-esteem in about equal degrees.

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But take care, Tommy. You are playing with edged tools. The time may come when this trusting and simple creature will no longer believe so implicitly in your gallant deeds, when suspicions may begin to arise in her mind, until at last you stand revealed as a braggart and a boaster.

Then, instead of the soft caresses and tender solicitude to which you have been accustomed, you may be met with nothing but scornful indifference and passive contempt.

For the misfortune of all those who indulge in the dangerous practice of blowing their own trumpet too offensively is, that after a very short time they are sure to be found out, and by none sooner than those who are nearest and dearest.

Women who have been once deceived in the object of their adoration are pitiless judges. Men are much more lenient, and often will derive amusement from the idiosyncracies of a friend.

But a wife never forgives her lord and master for bragging and boasting, once she discovers that he is an adept at these accomplishments.

She rushes from one extreme to another, and instead of regarding the unfortunate trumpeter as a prodigy of valour, very quickly gets to look upon him as a hypocrite, a humbug and an impostor.

Woe be to that man if hereafter he attempt to play the very feeblest and most mournful notes upon his cherished instrument. As the years pass, it runs a terrible chance of getting rusty from disuse, and even when he does snatch some rare opportunity of practising upon it, his tunes no longer sound as they did. The chirpiness has gone from them never to return.

4.—THE DANGEROUS WOMAN.

Some ten or fifteen years ago, the dangerous woman was not nearly so frequently met with in the hunting field as she is at present. She has multiplied in an alarming degree. Formerly, ladies who rode to hounds and who went as hard as men were the exception rather than the rule, and their staid female relations of a past generation looked upon them as utterly unsexed and wholly condemnable.

Now all this is changed. A great revolution has taken place in public opinion, and the growing popularity of the chase is rendered conspicuous by nothing so much as by the increased number of fair Dianas who join in our world-famed national amusement. Prejudice apart, there is no real reason why they shouldn't. The exercise is a healthy and a pleasant one. Nice, quiet women, country born and bred, possessing a natural love of sport, and a fair knowledge of it in all its various branches, are a

distinct ornament and addition to the hunting field. They resemble flowers on a dinner-table, adding to, rather than de-

tracting from the solid delights of the dinner itself.

Most of them have ridden since they were children, and know how to put a horse at a fence, quite as well, if not better than their husbands and brothers. Their hands are lighter, their sympathy more subtle, and unless they have the bad luck to "get down"—a misfortune which must happen to every one at times—they are never in anybody's way, and can thoroughly hold their own, even when hounds run hard over a stiffly inclosed country.

But the ladies of whom we are now speaking are the practised equestriennes, who, alas, to this day, form but a small contingent, and we are forced to admit that by far the greater portion of Amazons who grace the hunting field with their fair presence, can only be characterized as dangerous, both to themselves and their neighbours. They are the best-natured creatures in the world, brimming over with fun, good-humour and vitality. They mean no harm, not they; but for all that they are to be shunned and avoided.

Their courage and their ignorance is something surprising.

It is impossible to help giving a grudging admiration to the one, whilst loudly deploring the other. Without exaggeration they seem to know no fear, and to possess no nerves whatever. With loose seat, dangling reins and up-raised hand, they will drive their horse in any fashion, either trotting or galloping, sideways or standing (it makes no difference to them) at the most formidable obstacle. And, wonderful to relate, nine times out of ten they bundle over somehow; not gracefully or prettily, but still they get to the other side.

It really seems as if women, in spite of their physical inferiority and fragile exteriors, often possess more of that quality called "pluck" than the lords of creation. This may give rise to contrary opinions, but the conclusion has been arrived at in the following manner. Take a field, say, of some three or four hundred members. Perhaps three hundred and seventy of

these may be men, the remaining thirty, ladies.

You will probably be able to count the real hard riders among the former on the fingers of your two hands, whilst out of the thirty ladies, certainly half-a-dozen, if not more, will do their very best to keep with hounds, and this, too, in spite of the inferior animals they are often mounted upon. What becomes of the courage of three hundred and sixty two gentlemen who constitute the remainder of the field? Taking their lesser numbers into consideration, the fair sex certainly show a more gallant front than the men. True, in most instances, the man, from his superior strength and physi que, will certainly outdo the woman, but from a more comprehensive view, the ladies appear to possess a greater share of nerve.

In what other way is it possible to account for the presence out hunting of so many dangerous females? Their inexperience, their utter want of knowledge, their truly execrable horsemanship, have not the slightest deterring influence. Valour soars above such humble considerations, and scoffs at minor difficulties. Oh! for a little discretion, but that quality is conspicuous only by its absence.

A popular actress runs down from town for the day, accompanied by some enamoured and wealthy youth, who mounts her on his most perfect performer.

"Can she hunt?" "Oh! dear, yes. Why not?" "Has she ever been out before?" No, but she has ridden up and down the Row scores of times, is not a bit afraid, and sees no reason why she should not jump fences just as well as her neighbours.

Her youthful adorer tells her to fear nothing, to give her horse his head, and follow him. She nods back in reply, clenches her white teeth, and obeys literally. At the first fence, though it is but a gap, she flies clean out of the saddle, and is only re-seated, after a few agonizing seconds, by the shock occasioned from landing right on the quarters of her gallant leader.

Does she mind? Is she intimidated? Not she.

On the contrary, she gives a little triumphant laugh at finding she has not tumbled off altogether, as she certainly was very, very nearly doing, and bumps and rolls away over the trying ridge and furrow, forcibly reminding one of an ornamental jelly, that quivers and shakes preparatory to a most tremendous downfall. Her blood is aglow, and she is getting warmed to the saddle, so that at the next fence she does better, and is only pitched on to the horse's neck. By seizing hold of his mane, however, just in the nick of time, she manages to scramble back before any very serious mischief is done. Just think what courage it requires to jump, when every moment you fully expect to be jumped off. Why, it amounts to positive heroism.

For place or people our dangerous woman has no respect, and has not the faintest notion of waiting for her turn. She is much

too ignorant of the etiquette of the hunting field.

Seeing a small cluster of horsemen gathering round a fence, she at once imagines they are shirking, and with a loud "Look out, I'm coming!" charges right into their midst, mayhap knocking one or two down, but that is a matter of no consequence.

Then she flounders wildly over the obstacle, cannons against the unfortunate gentleman in front, and all but capsizes him and

herself too.

He looks round wrathfully, with ugly masculine oaths springing to his lips, and sees a pretty, saucy, flushed face smiling benignantly at him from under a battered pot hat and a halo of fuzzy flaxen hair considerably disordered. He recognizes

Miss Tottie Tootlekin of the "Gaiety," famed for the symmetry of her legs and the elegance of her dancing, and stifles his displeasure. Who can feel angry with so adorable a creature, even although she does not appear to greatest advantage when bundling over a fence? No! The dear thing has given him too much pleasure many a time ere now. Her divine breakdowns still linger in his memory. So after ascertaining that his horse has not been injured, he reserves the ugly words for another occasion—one is sure to arise before long—and smiles back at Miss Tottie in return. Now, if the dangerous woman were dangerous only at her fences, it might be possible by a little diplomacy to avoid her, but alas! such is not the case. As long as she is within twenty yards of you, you are never safe, and cannot foresee the vagaries which she may perform.

You very soon learn that it is wiser to yield her precedence at every obstacle, rather than expose yourself to the almost absolute certainty of being jumped upon. But it is horribly annoying, when you are galloping after the hounds to secure a start, to find your horse crossed and recrossed at almost every stride, until at last you hardly know how to get out of your tormentor's way.

Neither is it pleasant to be jostled against a gateway, and have your leg squeezed till you could scream with the pain, and you do not like having the gate itself slammed in your face, whilst Madame or Mademoiselle hustles through, regardless of everything and everybody, and makes not the smallest effort to keep it open.

Apparently it is beyond your power to escape altogether from the dangerous woman, for even whilst trotting quietly along the sides of the roads, she comes cantering up from behind and careless of the fact that you are altogether within your rights, and that there is no room for her to pass, she will remorselessly drive your most cherished hunter on to the various stone heaps, or else right into the ditch. As for an apology, she rarely condescends to make one, although she may have been the means of bringing you into direst trouble.

Another of the dangerous woman's little idiosyncracies is, that she possesses as supreme a disregard for canine as for human life. She jumps quite as readily upon a hound as upon a man, and thinks nothing at all of breaking the ribs of the best animal in the pack by riding over him. That is a very minor catastrophe.

"Hurt, is he? Oh! I'm awfully sorry, but it can't signify very much. There are plenty besides him, and he should not have got

in my way."

Hounds are simply so many speckled dogs to her, that have no particular value, and one appears exactly like the other. The proprietor's legitimate anger, something of which reaches her ears, seems utterly absurd and unreasonable. With a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, she exclaims:

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"Dear me! What a fuss, to be sure, and all about nothing. Just as if it mattered!"

When the huntsman is making a cast, and requires elbow room, she dashes ruthlessly in amongst the pack, and scatters them like a hail-storm.

Fortunately, there are a few external signs by which the dangerous woman may generally be distinguished. To begin with, her attire is nearly always wanting in that quiet, unostentatious neatness which characterizes the thorough sportswoman. She usually wears a blue, green, or peculiar coloured habit which does not fit, and is evidently made by a second or third rate tailor. The skirt bags round the waist, and the body is adorned with showy brass buttons. Not infrequently she appears in earrings or brooch, and makes liberal display of a gold watch chain and a bunch of charms. Her tie is either a dummy, or else so execrably tied that it works round under her ear. It is almost a certainty that her hair will come down during some period of the day, and her hat is always crooked, or else battered in. If hounds run well, her face grows very red. She is flushed and excited by the unwonted exercise. Her reins are loose, her seat unsteady, and her hunting-crop affords much inconvenience, especially the lash, which is perpetually getting entangled in something or other. The dangerous woman rarely, if ever, sits square on her horse, with the left shoulder brought well forward, and elbows into her side. She goes flopping, and jogging, and jolting along, in a manner which, though painful to the beholder, must be infinitely more so to the unfortunate steed who is doomed to carry her.

Men as a body regard her with detestation, and never lose an

opportunity of expressing their aversion.

Every defect is sneered at and magnified. Not one but has some story to tell against her, or who owes the dangerous woman a grudge.

They resent her presence in the hunting field, and not without cause. Her ignorance incenses, and her rashness irritates, until she cheats herself out of the admiration ever due to courage.

The fact is, if the men must be knocked down like ninepins, they would much prefer the process being performed by one of their own sex. At least they could then have the gratification of expressing their sentiments in forcible language, and allow wounded feeling to find a natural outlet.

It is a hard case to be forced to bottle it up, because a wild and dangerous female chooses to bowl you over and to treat you with-

out any ceremony whatever.

5.—THE SPORTING HORSE DEALER.

THE sporting horse dealer constitutes a feature of almost every hunting field. He comes out with the intention of selling his

horses, and keeping that end steadily in view, manages very successfully to combine business with pleasure. When pursuing the fox, he honestly feels that he is enjoying himself, and yet not

neglecting his profession.

Not infrequently he is a gentleman by birth, specious and plausible, whose apparent candour puts you off your guard and overcomes your better judgment. It is as well to fight shy of him. Your dealings with him are seldom, if ever, quite satisfactory, and you have no redress. He holds you hard and fast to your bargain, and refuses to take back an unsuitable animal, except at a ruinous price. In short, the gentleman dealer will nearly always contrive to get the better of you in some way or other, whilst if a quarrel arises, he invariably manages to have the law on his side. We dismiss him, since it is not of him we would speak, but of the regular, old-fashioned sporting dealer, who gains a more or less precarious livelihood from his profession, and who, five times out of six, is a real good fellow.

If he recommends you an animal which he has ridden to hounds himself, his recommendation can generally be depended upon. He knows exactly what a hunter ought to be, and in what requirements he fails. He has a decided advantage there, for he judges from personal experience, whereas non-sporting dealers are either forced to buy from looks alone or else from hearsay; never a very reliable method. You need not blame them for deceiving you, for are not they themselves continually being

deceived?

There is no greater mistake than for people to imagine, as they so constantly do, that their pet dealer is infallible. Alas! poor man, he is frequently taken in, and moreover, perpetually subjected to very severe losses and disappointments. Folk in a hunting county will not buy without a trial with hounds. They send back the horses lame, coughing, or so seriously injured as to greatly detract from their value. The dealer has to bear the risk of seeing his property depreciated for the sake of the chance of getting rid of it altogether. Then, again, he sells what he believes to be a sound, honest animal at a good profit. The nag drops down dead, whilst being conveyed in the train to his future destination, and a post-mortem examination reveals that he has been suffering from abscess on the brain, a clot of blood, aneurism, or a hundred other unsuspected causes. Here, again, the dealer has to put up with the loss. Frost too has to be taken into calculation. If the earth is icebound no one will buy, and there is very little money to be made when some twenty or thirty horses are standing week after week in the stable, eating their heads off. As a rule, dealers are not nearly so black as they are painted. There may be a certain proportion of rogues amongst their ranks, just as there are in every other walk of life, but at the same time, honest, respectable ones exist, whose chief anxiety is to suit their customers and study their

interests. Buyers are often unreasonable and almost impossible

to please.

If they buy a horse, and he does not happen to turn out well, they at once abuse the dealer, and declare they have been done. Temper, want of condition, sprains, splints that develop themselves subsequent to the day of purchase, in fact, every ailment—and they are many—to which the noble animal is heir are all laid at the same door; and however straightforward a dealer may be, he seldom gets the credit of being so. People are so horribly and ridiculously suspicious, that they prefer to believe the worst, rather than the best of one another, and they fail to see how often they defeat their own ends by jumping without sufficient grounds at the conclusion that their neighbour is deliberately trying to cheat them. Why! in nine cases out of ten it is to their neighbour's interest to treat them well, rather than badly, and self-interest, as we all know, is the great motive power which rules the world.

We maintain that, whatever the sporting horse dealer's faults may be—and as, like the rest of us, he is only mortal, the presumption is he has some—he is a truly gallant fellow, and the

harder he rides the more you may trust him.

He lives quietly, eats and drinks sparingly, retires to rest at ten o'clock every night of his life, rises with the lark, writes all his business letters, attends to his accounts, and superintends his stable arrangements before he goes a-hunting, and has nerves of iron, wrists of steel. He sallies forth on some gay four or five The animal has probably only been in his stables a couple of days, and he knows absolutely nothing about it. a tall, muscular young fellow, with a keen, hawk-like eye, and long legs that curl themselves well round a horse and make him yield to their compelling pressure. It takes a great deal to unseat him, as the young ones soon find out. Our friend trots out to covert at a steady pace, eschewing company. He feels his animal's mouth and otherwise makes acquaintance with him. he is a brute, it does not take him long to discover the fact, and he calculates the highest price obtainable, and where to place him. To keep a bad horse never pays, yet on the other hand the good ones sell themselves. No subtle persuasion or half truths are required in their case.

Once arrived at the meet the manners of the young one are quickly ascertained. If they are nice our sporting dealer allows him to mix freely with the crowd, riding him with long reins, and making him bend well to the bridle hand. His friends and cus-

tomers exchange salutations.

"Hulloa, H.!" they exclaim. "What sort of a horse is that

you're on? Is he a clipper?"

H. smiles gently—there is something singularly childlike about his expression when he smiles—and says:

"Don't know yet, sir; but I'll be able to give you a more satisfactory answer after to-day. At least," he adds sotto voce, "I

hope so."

After a while the hounds find, and H., who is averse from revealing his stable secrets to the whole field before he knows them himself, starts off, taking care to ride a little wide of the pack, but nevertheless keeping them well within view. Before long, a fence comes across his path, and fortunately it is just such a one as he would wish to meet with, being a thin bullfinch, with a shallow ditch on the take-off side, over which a good horse can jump, and a bad one scramble without much risk of a fall.

He gives the "young 'un" a touch of the spur, and the willing animal cocks his small spirited ears, and bounds over like an indiarubber ball. That will do. H. has already confidence in his steed, and sends him striding along the green pastures with a vengeance; for hounds by this time have settled to the line, and

are running at racing pace over the sound old turf.

A couple more fences, cleared lightly and well, prove that his mount knows his business, and is worth at least a hundred and fifty if not two hundred guineas. H. now has no hesitation in joining the bulk of the field. He is prepared to show them how the "young 'un" can perform, and not hide his light under a bushel by riding a solitary line.

At the first check he casts a rapid glance around and takes in all the bearings of the situation. A stiff piece of timber, over four feet in height, divides him from the calmly expectant crowd, who being on the right side, and in the same field with the hounds, look with pleasurable curiosity at the rash horseman on the

wrong.

This, however, is our friend H.'s opportunity; one which he contrives to make most days when he has the satisfaction of finding himself on a decently good hunter. Personally he knows no fear, being a man of dauntless courage, so he sets the young horse at the stout ash rails, with the determination of one who will not be denied, and who, by hook or by crook, intends to get to the other side. The good beast, feeling this, clears them brilliantly, and with a foot to spare. A murmur of approval runs through the crowd as H. quietly pulls him back into a walk, and looks to the right and to the left, with a bland air which seems to say, "Gentlemen, that's nothing, nothing at all. Wait until you see us take something really worth calling a jump."

This little episode is not without result. Presently, as hounds are still feathering uncertainly about the ridges and furrows, one of H.'s oldest customers approaches, and takes a prolonged survey

of his animal.

"Niceish horse that you're on to-day," he says laconically.

"Yes, sir, very," H. replies. "Sort of horse would carry you like a bird. See what loins he has, and what a back. That's the

stamp gentlemen want to get over a country with, and be carried in safety."

"Very likely, but I'm not requiring a hunter just now. I'm full."

"Indeed, sir! More's the pity; for this is the nicest young horse I've been on for a long time. They are not to be bought every day. Perhaps you would oblige me by throwing your leg over him, not with a view to purchasing, but merely to see if your opinion is the same as mine. He gives you a wonderful feel over his fences, and is as quiet and temperate as a seasoned hunter."

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After some little further persuasion, the customer does as desired, and descending from his own horse, mounts the young one, whose attention being concentrated on the hounds, stands quite submissively during the operation. His present rider merely intends to canter him round the field, feeling that against his better judgment he has weakly yielded to H.'s solicitations, but hounds suddenly take up the scent and fling forward at a great rate. Before he can change back they are stealing ahead, and he is bound to stick to his mount, unless he would lose sight of them altogether.

A brilliant twenty minutes follow over the very cream of the country. Fences are big, and towards the end of it men begin to tumble about like ninepins. A wide bottom is productive of much "grief," but the "young 'un" faces it like a lion, and carries him in grand style.

After all, what does it matter if his stables are full? He begins making a variety of plans as to how he can turn old Rattletrap into the cow-shed, and run him up a temporary box until the spring, when he will be turned out to grass; how he will find a good home for Glorvina, whose fore legs are daily getting more and more shaky; and how, if the worst comes to the worst, he might part with Slinker, who can never quite be depended upon at either water or timber. In short, those twenty minutes produce a most curious revolution in his state of mind, for whereas he began by being certain that he didn't want another horse, he ends by feeling convinced that he cannot possibly do without one, and should be absolutely culpable if he did not avail himself of the present opportunity. "Buy when you can, not when you must," his inward monitor advises.

Meanwhile H. has had an unusually pleasant and comfortable ride on his customer's confidential hunter, and has kept close behind that gentleman all the way, so as to pick him up in case of accidents. None occur, fortunately, and each fence well cleared adds an extra five-pound note to his property. When at length hounds run into their fox, and he is asked to put a price upon the young horse, he looks shrewdly at his customer's flushed and beaming face, and replies without any symptoms of hesitation:

"I can't take a penny less than two hundred and twenty

guineas for him, sir, even from you. I should ask most people

two fifty, but I should like to suit you if I can."

The customer has been too much delighted by the horse's performances to make any demur or haggle over the sum demanded, and before H. leaves the hunting field, the good young animal on whom he sallied forth in the morning has passed out of his possession. Sometimes he wishes he could keep them a little longer, but he has no cause to regret the transaction, having cleared over a hundred net profit.

This, however, is one of his lucky days, and it is quite on the cards that a great portion of this hundred will dwindle away in paying for the unlucky ones, on which occasions he derives neither pleasure nor remuneration. But that's the way of the profession. If good horses did not pay for the bad, trade would come to a standstill altogether, and leave a very sorry balance at the banker's at the end of the year. It makes a thorough hunter come dear,

but what's to be done? Dealers must live.

Apart from this, our friend H. is entitled to the very highest praise for the truly gallant fashion in which he risks his neck on behalf of his customers. It is he who ascertains for them what an animal is worth, and many and many a nasty, unpleasant ride must he have during the process. He has to put up with kickers, rearers, rank refusers, curs, brutes of all kinds, to accommodate himself to hard mouths and light mouths, rough paces and smooth, fast and slow, rogues and roarers, in short every species of animal, good, bad and indifferent.

The great majority of men who go out hunting are filled with self-pride, and think an immense deal of themselves if they cross a country successfully on tried performers whom they know intimately. H. manages to keep with hounds on the very worst of nags, and by his patience, courage and fine horsemanship

frequently succeeds in converting them into hunters.

Do not let us, then, grudge him his profits—they are not as large as they seem—and if any man deserves them, he does. He has to subsist like the rest of us, but he will not "do" you intentionally, and if the sporting horse dealer were to disappear from our hunting fields he would leave a decided gap, and prove a very serious loss to most people who follow hounds. We want him, and cannot get on without him, whilst his gallantry and courage call forth our highest admiration. Long may he continue to hunt and give us the pleasure of witnessing his gallery jumps.

The humorous dealer is another type frequently met with.

He is an older and a heavier man, who rides great fine weightcarriers, and generally occupies a forward place when hounds run. By the bright, sparkling and persuasive wit of his tongue he secures many a customer, who begins by laughing at his jokes, and ends by buying his horses. He is full of anecdote, gossip and

story, and has the ready tact and happy knack of suiting his conversation to his listener. To the elderly gentleman he talks politics, and reveals any deficiency in the animal he desires to sell with a peculiarly magnanimous frankness that produces an excellent effect. For the younger generation he has always some bon mot ready, or some choice, very choice tale adapted to their intellects and taste. With ladies he is simple, sentimental, cordial, poetical and loftily philosophical by turns. He is a clever fellow, who makes a profound study of human nature, and knows the foibles both of men and women by heart. His powers of observation stand him in good stead, and teach the wisdom and necessity of humouring customers. Perhaps he laughs at them behind their back, but he manages to dissemble his real opinions on most ordinary occasions. Nevertheless, he has strong instinctive likes and dislikes, which could not be otherwise with his quick brains and ready tongue. He hates a dullard or a fool, and holds him in supreme contempt. He cannot always succeed in concealing his feelings, though he flatters himself that he does.

Provided a man treats him well, he will treat him well in return, but if he attempt to display any reprehensible "cuteness," or behaves in an ungentlemanly fashion, then he feels no compunction in paying him back in his own coin. If for interest's sake he does not sell him a downright bad horse, he will mercilessly castigate him with his tongue, and humble him to the very dust by a storm of shrewd, unanswerable remarks full of worldly wisdom and native wit. Few men can beat him in argument or repartee. He wields those formidable weapons with a dexterity conferred by long practice and much natural ability, and moreover delights in the effect they produce. Nothing pleases him more than to squash an enemy who has incurred his righteous wrath, but it requires a good deal of provocation to draw him into one of these contests, and it is only when his probity is doubted, his word disbelieved, or his feelings wounded that he shows his claws. What would the British lion be worth if he were always chained up in an iron cage, and could not fight on occasion? Is a man to be insulted with impunity, simply because he is a horse dealer? No, certainly not. He is made of flesh and blood, that quivers and throbs under a smarting word, just like every one else.

Our humorous friend is a man of considerable culture, who takes an interest in all the leading topics of the day. Moreover, he has a taste for reading, and gets through a good many works of miscellaneous fiction. A sentimental novel, ending up with love and matrimony, pleases him immensely, for beneath his somewhat rough exterior beats a warm and kindly heart, easily touched by romance. Altogether he is original and a character; differing from ordinary, common-place humanity, who sometimes fail to understand him. In consequence, he now and then makes enemies, who dub him forward, vulgar, pert; but his friends far

outnumber his foes, and they laud "Old G." up to the skies, and talk of him as a first-rate "chap." They laugh immoderately at his witticisms and caustic observations, and wherever he happens to be, a little circle of admirers invariably surround him, eager to hear the last good story, and to repeat it to their comrades. "Old G." is one of the best-known men in the hunting field, and on a dull day when scent is poor and things slack all round, he seldom fails to enliven the proceedings. All the same he never loses sight of the main chance, and whilst laughing, jesting and talking, effects many a "deal." He keeps a good class of horse, and as a rule treats his customers liberally and well. Rub him the right side instead of the wrong, and there is no better fellow in the world than "Old G." His tongue will only amuse, and neither offend nor insult, if you possess sufficient insight to discern that he is not one of the baker's dozen, turned out so freely by Nature's mould, but possesses a distinct individuality of his own.

Then we have the stout and affable dealer of the rosy cheeks, blue eye and benignant smile, who looks rippling over with the milk of human kindness. His manners are quite charming; so soft, suave and persuasive, and there is a sort of innocent frankness about him, which it needs the utmost moral courage to resist. He carries you away insensibly. Those unctuous utterances of his, possess an irresistible fascination, and cast a glamour over

your clearer judgment.

He comes out hunting on a compact jumping cob, as sensible as a man, and in a sober way thoroughly enjoys the chase, though he does not profess to ride hard. He has a quick eye for a horse, and always has a useful lot in his stables, and is so courteous and fair spoken that he can persuade a customer into buying almost anything he chooses. Not until the customer is removed from the magic of his presence does he remember that he really has not had much of a trial, and that the fences jumped were absurdly small.

Other dealers there are many. It would take us too long to describe the different types, but taken as a body, all hunting people owe them a debt of thanks, and should hold out the hand of friendship to the men who find them good horses with which

to enjoy their favourite pursuit.

THE PHANTOMS OF FLEURY.

IT was towards the end of August when I paid my first visit to

the old Château de Fleury.

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My road, a mere cart track, lay across the plain, between the golden stubble fields that till a few days before had been covered with ripe corn. It was not often I walked away from the great forest that stretched darkly over the gently swelling hills behind me, but it was late in the afternoon, the shadows already gathered thickly beneath its shade, and I turned involuntarily towards the My walk was solitary. The only people I met were one or two labourers, men and women, returning from their work, who saluted me as they passed with a "Bon soir, m'sieu." The scene was very peaceful; the air was warm and soft, the sinking sun cast his rays gently over the earth; far away, from one of the many villages dotted on the plain, came the sound of the vesperbell, and the land looked very fair. But with its beauty there was also that sadness which will come when summer is giving place to autumn. The earth is at rest. She has brought her wealth of fruit and flowers to perfection and is taking a breathing space before beginning her winter struggles. Summer is still with her, but he hovers with outstretched wings, ready to answer the voices that call him elsewhere, turning a last tender, loving farewell look upon the land he has so blessed with his presence.

And with this sadness upon me, I passed through the old gateway and stood in the great quadrangle. The grass had grown long and the paths were covered with weeds, but it was not quite deserted, for at the well an old man in a blue apron was drawing water. He raised his bucket and with slow laborious steps turned and passed through a little postern gate, the water splashing over as he went. The inclosure in which I stood was formed on three sides by outhouses and stables; on the fourth, facing me, by the dwelling house, forming a second court and separated from the large one by a moat, crossed by a drawbridge. This inner court was brilliant with flowers, wasting their sweetness sadly, for there was no one now to open the shuttered windows and come down the terrace steps to wonder at their beauty. And I stood under the great limes by the well and thought of the days gone by when the château had been full of life and gaiety, and wondered if such

times would ever come again.

Presently I roused myself, and turning to the left I went round to the other side of the house. The moat surrounded it only on three sides; the back, or rather the real front, faced a large lake in a far-stretching green park. There was a terrace on this side of the building too, the steps leading into a beautiful rose garden. The roses were falling now, but the evening air was laden with their scent, and here and there was still a perfect flower. The shadows were lengthening over the water; two or three little islands lay darkly on its surface; the wild luxuriance of the vegetation pointed, no doubt, to the fact that the place was very damp, but on this August evening it looked warm and sweet enough.

Presently the sun flung a last bright smile to the tall, stately trees, and touched the weathercocks on the old turrets with gold. The sky became tinged with delicate pale green and rose colour, the reflection of the sunset I could not see. For a few minutes the old place was full of soft light, and then the radiance slowly

died away and the twilight came on apace.

Still I could not bring myself to leave the spot. I had sunk down upon a moss-covered stone among the roses and was gazing out over the lake. Vague, dreamy thoughts came floating through

my brain, and I sat on unconscious of the passing time.

Suddenly I became aware that the light on the picture before me was changing. Mysterious shadows lay upon the grass on the opposite shore of the lake. The islands were floating in a silvery mist. An old boat moored close to me seemed to shine like a fairy skiff, fit for any of those dainty dames of the olden time, of whom I had been dreaming, to take their pleasure in. Clearer and clearer became the light, more fairy-like and bright the scene, and when my own shadow grew out of the ground at my feet, I turned, and behold, the great golden moon had climbed the heavens and was peeping through the trees to the east. A slight breeze sprang up and rustled their leaves softly. They whispered and bent to one another, and the air was full of their sound. In the centre of the lake a fish leapt, breaking the water into a thousand sparkling ripples that eddied to my feet.

At last I rose and turned to go, when I became aware of a startling change in the appearance of the house. It was no longer dark and deserted. The shutters were thrown open. Lights shone from every casement, and figures passed rapidly to and fro. On the ground-floor the door-windows were wide open on to the terrace, and a stream of light poured forth from each, mingling with the moonlight. Sounds of music floated out to me; not the jingling, rapid airs of our modern dances, but slow and stately measures that brought with them visions of powder and patches, rapiers and lace ruffles. Amazed I watched for a little time and then, curiosity getting the better of me, I went up the steps and stood by the centre window; presently I went in. No one seemed

to notice me, and I looked on quietly.

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A long broad hall stretched before me, evidently going the whole length of the building. The floor was highly polished, and reflected the light of hundreds of wax candles that hung in clusters against silver sconces on the oak walls. At one end was a musician's gallery, whence came the sounds I had heard. The front of it was festooned with flowers, and flowers were twined round the frames of the family portraits on the walls. There were many portraits, of all periods. Knights in armour, dames in high-peaked headdresses, grave statesmen in furred gowns, children playing with dogs, and demure maidens in ruffs and farthingales. But my attention soon strayed from the pictures to the figures passing and repassing before me. It was evidently a great and important gathering. The host appeared to be a tall portly man, his powdered hair tied with black ribbon, a violet satin embroidered coat, and fine lace ruffles at throat and wrist. He leant on a goldheaded cane and tapped a snuff-box as he talked. There were crowds of courtly men talking to elegant women, whose eyes glanced all the brighter for their powder and rouge. At one end two couples were gliding through a minuet with many a bow and sweeping courtesy. As I grew more accustomed to the brilliant scene, I seemed to know instinctively who some of the people were. Those two old dames on the settee in that corner are kinswomen of the host, and their tongues have not ceased since I came in. No doubt they are discussing some dainty dish of scandal. That tall stern man moving about with an air of authority must surely be the son and heir.

But there is a couple that more than all the rest excites my curiosity. The man is small and slight and fair; he is dressed in the extreme of fashion, in pale pink satin, with diamond buckles on his shoes. His rapier has a jewelled hilt, and through it is drawn an embroidered handkerchief. He stands near the top of the room, and is evidently a guest of importance, for the host pauses now and again to smile and say a few words, which the young man answers carelessly in a thin, bored voice. His partner is a much more interesting study. She is very youngnot more than seventeen—and has a delicate, fragile look. hair is piled loosely on the top of her head, and a blue ribbon runs through it. It is the only bit of colour about her. Her white silk sacque falls in full, graceful folds from her shoulders; she holds a drooping cluster of white roses in her hands, which nervously arrange and rearrange the flowers; her face is very colourless, and her deep blue eyes have a strained, nervous look. The two do not seem at ease in each other's company; from time to time the gentleman pays the lady a vapid compliment, to which

she responds faintly or not at all.

Now there is a general move towards the top of the room, and the musicians cease. The company gathers round a square oak table; on it are pens, ink and several large sheets of paper.

A man in plain black garments, evidently a notary, takes a seat. Father and son stand near each other, and on the farther side the young couple who have so interested me; then I see the likeness between the girl and the two men opposite, and it flashes across my mind that I am assisting at that betrothal scene I had heard of a few days before. The notary begins to read; the document tells of the dower of the bride and the settlements made by the bridegroom, calling forth many exclamations of wonder and sighs of envy from the assembled guests. The father and son listen with stern satisfaction; the bridegroom pretends to pay no attention; the bride, poor little thing, gets paler and more nervous. Now the reading has come to an end, and amidst a buzz of conversation the host rises and signs the papers. The witnesses on his side follow, then the bridegroom and his witnesses. notary turns to the bride, and smiling, offers her the pen. With trembling fingers she takes it, then hesitates. Her great sad eyes are lifted appealingly to her brother, and seeing no hope there she looks at her father, and a piteous murmur that is half a sob breaks from her: "Father!" But no softness comes over the stern face. "It is your turn to sign, my daughter!" is all the response she gets. Despairingly she bends over the table.

and her name is added to the rest.

The business being over, the ladies crowd round her with congratulations on the splendid match, and surrounded by them she moves away. Presently she begs them to leave her by the window. She feels a little faint, she says, but a few moments' quiet will soon put her right, and they leave her in the deep embrasure. Once alone, she rises and, watching her opportunity, slips out into the night. I, too, step through my window and see her flit across the terrace in the moonlight. At the foot of the steps a man starts out of the deep shadow, with a low: "At last, sweetheart!" and catches the slender figure in his arms for a moment. Wrapping a large dark cloak over her white garments, he draws her arm through his and leads her a few steps, when he is stopped by a hand placed suddenly on his shoulder. Turning, he sees the dark face of his lady's brother. With a cry the girl starts from him and flings herself between the two men. Her brother thrusts her aside: "Stand back! I have to deal with him, not you!" But she clings to him sobbing, and sinking on her knees, promises anything if he will only let her lover go safe. He shakes himself free, and in another moment the crash of swords brings a wondering crowd to the windows. No one interferes, or attempts to go to the poor child holding the back of a seat to keep herself upright. Presently a heavy fall and a shriek from the girl tells what the end is. The white figure flies to the prostrate man, and the little hands try to lift the heavy head. "Kiss me, sweetheart," murmurs the dying man; "I wish I could have saved you," and then all is still.

For a few minutes no one moves. The lovers lie as if both, instead of one, were dead; the guests gaze at them with pale, scared faces, and midway between the two groups, half-way up the steps, father and son speak in a low whisper. The moon sheds her calm, silvery light over all, as she would were the scene she illumined a happy instead of a most tragic one. Suddenly I see the girl lift her head; noiselessly she rises to her knees, then to her feet. The two men on the steps notice nothing, so deep are they in their whispered conference. With a swift, stealthy movement she glides down to the water's edge, and before her father and brother, warned by a cry from their guests, can stop her, she has stepped into a light pleasure boat moored there, and has pushed off into the lake. In vain are the cries to her to return. She floats slowly away in the moonlight, and as a solemn hush comes over the spectators, the sound of a low-crooned song comes across the water. Then it stops and the white figure rises to its feet, a sobbing cry reaches us, and, with lifted arms and upturned face, it sinks—sinks—and disappears. A scream bursts from some one in the crowd—and the figures vanish.

I was sitting alone among the roses, the old house stood silent and deserted behind me, the crazy boat was quietly moored at the little landing stage, but the moon had disappeared and an owl in the trees near by was sending forth his melancholy cry on the

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A. H

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," RTC.

CHAPTER X.

A BOY BRIDEGROOM.

IT was in relation to this drawback of her lonely expatriation, which Frances found to loom in greater prominence before her the nearer the time approached for her departure, that she hit on a satisfactory solution to the difficulty which would not have occurred to many people. She was contemplating rather ruefully one day the obligation of travelling with her baby, and no other companions save an awkward, useless English serving-maid, and an equally clumsy, stupid serving-man whom she had engaged at low wages to go with her to France. For Sir George had of necessity preceded her with his detachment of fellow-soldiers. The prospect after her arrival was not much more agreeable. would have to live shut up in a French lodging, with her husband absent for the greater part of the time on his military duties. Tied down as she must be, it would be hardly in her power to attend the court even when she was bidden. She had heard much of that splendid court from Elizabeth Hamilton, and it was Frances's ambition-prompted partly by her own vanity and love of power, partly in her husband's interest for his credit and prosperity—to win fresh laurels there. The obstacle was her lack of means wherewith to provide a suitable substitute to take her place when she was absent; for even she, with all her confidence and daring, recognized that it was impossible for her to leave a helpless infant in the charge of Bet and Barty in a household of foreigners, of whom the mother knew nothing.

Then Lady Hamilton suddenly asked herself why should not Cherry Norton accompany her? She, Frances, was fond of Cherry, whom nobody wanted at home, while her cousin might and would want her child-crony abroad. Cherry was only a simple girl who had just entered on her teens, but Frances found a charm in her, and had already noted her courage and intelligence. The woman knew the child Cherry was as trusty as steel and as good as gold.

It would be promotion of a kind for her to see the world, and she would like it, because she returned her patroness's regard according to the uncalculating nature of the young creature in a

measure which was heaped up and running over.

The Hills, the only people who had any right to dispose of Cherry, were in poorer circumstances than ever. Indeed, they had been already talking reluctantly of the incumbency, in justice to their children, of their getting rid of their niece by sending her out into service of some sort, though Mrs. Hill would fare badly

without the girl's willing help and patient drudgery.

At the same time, equally in justice to herself and her husband, with their offspring present and future, Frances could not for a moment take the responsibility of providing for Cherry, though Lady Hamilton liked her young cousin passing well and would have been glad to show her the world, perhaps lend her a lift in life which ought to keep pace (in proportion) with the Hamiltons' climb to the top of the tree. But thrifty Frances did not even care to pay Cherry's expenses to France. She thought it hard enough on her finances to have to discharge the duty for Bet and Barty.

Quick as lightning another idea struck Lady Hamilton a brilliant idea. Why not contract Cherry, before she went, to some youth of tolerable position and means, who would come bound for her maintenance thenceforth? He would be only too thankful to have his wife finish her education under such favourable auspices, and to him, in days to come, the child-wife could look with assurance for a suitable provision. This was to do her cousin a good

turn, without mistake.

Such marriages had not yet gone entirely out of fashion, though they were rarer than they used to be. The late King, Charles the Martyr's eldest daughter, poor Princess Mary, not long dead of the small-pox, had been married when a bright little girl of ten to the Prince of Orange, a manly lad of fifteen; only last year—an eventful year in Frances's calendar—his Grace of Monmouth, his present Majesty's son, had contracted a marriage with his little mistress, Lady Anne Scott, the great Scotch heiress, then a girl of thirteen. Humbler people were not slow to follow royal examples, and it was not an absolute requirement, though it was a frequent ingredient in these marriages, that the bride should be "a fortune."

The tug of war, and it would have foiled all save the most dauntless of combatants, was to find within a given time a match for Cherry, to make her friends see the propriety of the match, and to get her and her partner in the transaction to agree to it and to her accompanying her cousin to France.

Frances's inventive genius could suggest no more fitting person than her cousin—a genuine cousin once removed in this instance—Peter Thornhurst, who was staying in London at this time. He was a likely enough lad of sixteen, though he was not quite so well to do or so entirely his own master with regard to the property to which he was heir as the match-maker could have

wished.

He had nothing to do with Agnes Court in Kent, the place which had belonged to Frances's grandfather and had come through Madam Jennings to Richard Jennings in Hertfordshire. Peter was the eldest son of a worthy Kent parson, who, not content with burying himself among his books, had committed the still more unpardonable imprudence of marrying a second time a portionless damsel, who had brought him a large family of younger children in addition to Peter, the son by the first wife. These were not very promising antecedents for the object which Frances had in view. But there was yet another cousin Thornhurst, a brother of Peter's father, an elderly bachelor, a man of substance and the squire of Three Elms, who had agreed to do something for the lad, which he might well undertake to do, seeing it was understood that Peter was to be his heir. It was by the instrumentality and at the expense of Thornhurst of Three Elms that the boy was in London, with his commission in the King's Regiment bought for him and a modest sum of money to meet his expenses placed at his disposal.

Frances did not choose to ask herself with what eyes Thornhurst, the uncle who certainly was entitled to be consulted on any arrangement entered into on his nephew's behalf, would look on his early marriage with a penniless girl like Cherry Norton. All that the young lady would permit herself to see with regard to her cousin Peter and her cousin of Three Elms, was the meritoriousness of her, a Thornhurst on her mother's side, not having sought to make the acquaintance and get into the good graces of the squire of Three Elms in order to oust his nephew from his inheritance and secure it for Sir George and Lady Hamilton. It detracted from the merit of this disinterestedness that Frances had not set eyes on her elderly cousin, and that, further, he was known to regard her mother with cordial detestation. But Frances was not in the habit of doing such small sums in moral arithmetic as would have enabled her to add or subtract from the

tale of disinterestedness with which she credited herself.

Peter's father, a simple, unworldly soul, did not share his kinsman's dislike to Madam Jennings. He had even written to her to bespeak her good will or that of any of her family who might be in town, as friends, as well as kinsfolk to his lad. The letter came to Frances's ears, though she was not on terms with her mother, and she forthwith put her finger in the pie and made up to Peter. Not only so, in her genius for arranging for everybody, and ruling all around her, she had recommended him to lodge with the Hills, who would have the benefit of the sum paid for his board and lodging. Thus, what might be reckoned an im-

portant advantage in the case, especially as it had to be settled speedily, was secured already. Peter and Cherry were personally acquainted, nay, they were good friends, for the lad was an honest lad and a kindly, if somewhat faulty in temper. He was one of a large family, straitened in their worldly means, nevertheless the members of that branch of the Thornhursts were wholesomehearted and sweet-blooded. In place of his harassed step-mother's finding him the plague of her life, he was her right-hand man, a greater stay even than his reverence, and Peter loyally regarded her as the best friend he had in the world after his father. He was as fond of his little brothers and sisters as if they had been whole and not half kindred, and as if he had been an affectionate girl instead of a brave boy. His first instinct in the circumstances was to help. When he saw how Cherry Norton was put upon and overworked in the service of the Hills, he forgot all about his sword-knot, the pipe-claying of his belt and his step in marching. in order to do the best he could to lighten her load.

Cherry, not to be outdone, strove that his comfort, of which he made so little, should be better attended to than Mrs. Hill would have dreamt of demeaning herself to look after it, though she consented to be paid for so demeaning herself. Many a slice of hot meat, dish of quince marmalade, and darned stocking he owed to

Cherry.

But these were not exactly the relations which betoken a dawning love affair. Indeed Peter and Cherry were on the most plain-spoken of friendly terms. "You know you are only a girl, Cherry; you can understand nothing at all about it," he would tell her with brutal frankness, when his boyish tongue was running on about his drill, his future barracks, his commanding officers, and the foreign campaigns he hoped to see one day. "And I think, Peter, if you would pick your steps, your stockings need not be so muddy," she would suggest, "nor your shoe knots catch the mire, for you have rather a big foot. You are shooting out in your growth—you cannot help that, any more than you will be able to prevent the sleeves of your regimental coat getting short at the wrists. What I'm fain to believe you might mend in your habits, is your tramping through all the puddles on your way to and from Whitehall."

"I'll try to remember," he would say in his good nature, which was yet quite consistent with a fiery spirit and a stubborn temper when he was roused. "I don't want to put people to any trouble I can save them from. But lord! Cherry, if you saw the roads at home! and what would any man have thought of me if he had come upon me gingerly picking my steps like my mother or my little sister Nan? Did I ever tell thee, Cherry, how she will hold out her frock and dance in the kitchen to us all?—'tis the prettiest sight. Even father, though he hath no mind for dancing, cannot

find it in his heart to chide her."

Secretly he thought Cherry's round brown cheeks and great

dark eyes like a gypsy's, and not at all pretty. If you wanted beauty, now, there was his Cousin Hamilton: there were a skin and a colour with hair as fair as Nan's; she had been to court, and dwelt there—sure, she was a fine lady, with a great deal to say to you and mighty amusing. But poor Cherry was no beauty and no wit, though the good wench had sense. She was a fright in her old red skirt and bodice and white sleeves, from which she had grown away as she said he would do from his smart regimentals.

Cherry would have borne him no malice if she could have read his thoughts; she would have granted he was right in the main, while privately she was of opinion that he was countrified in his talk and manners, that his ears were as large, in proportion, as his feet, that his nose was too broad and his teeth set too far apart.

There was not a particle of illusion where these two were concerned. There was even small material in their unripe juvenile natures, as yet, out of which to construct dreams and fancies, vague yearnings, exquisite joy and unfathomable despair. Both boy and girl were precocious after a fashion, manly and womanly for their years, but it was a kind of precocity that had thrown another side of their natures into the background, and deprived them of the

leisure to develop one description of sentiment.

Cherry's case was less hopeless at present than Peter's. Little girls of twelve may be simple and straightforward. They may but lately have left off nursing dolls and playing with skipping ropes; they may even have been prematurely caught up by real household cares and swept away by real live babies. But it is in the nature of the small maidens to be visited on occasions with shy, dim visions of a fairy prince; not many young girls, let us trust, have either the bold, defiant temper, or the hard, worldly education of Frances Jennings, which rendered her impervious to the idealization of love in her sixteenth year, and a slave to the actual passion before she was seventeen. Because, as everybody knows, love is a disease which, like measles, to be taken easily and got through without any difficulty, must be surmounted in its earlier stages in our first youth. Seventeen is not very old, but age is comparative, and Frances was not young at seventeen. Cherry, on the contrary, had not missed her visions—only they were of the very shyest and vaguest, far too much so to have a personal fulfilment for long years to Peter Thornhurst, the fairy prince! Cherry would have half expired with laughter, half died with shame at the idea.

But if Cherry was in a bad frame of mind for Frances's cruel experiment, Peter's state was all but hopeless. Sound a manly boy of sixteen, full of a boy's restless activity, dawning ambition and innumerable interests in the world without, on his views as to a wife and you will probably affront him or tickle him, or do both,

beyond measure. Go further and point out the wife you are thinking of for him. This is not one of his elder sister's companions, some young woman in the glory of her young womanhood whom he cannot choose but admire in a startled, dazzled way. Neither is it some older woman still, the widowed mother of a younger playmate, who has been kind and sympathetic to the lad, for whose autumn charms and gentle motherliness he has felt a chivalrous thrill of devotion. It is an old-fashioned girl of twelve, growing away from her frocks, who knows nothing in his estimation, whose toilsome tasks he has taken upon himself out of sheer pity, whom in the same matter-of-fact spirit he has suffered to cater for him out of carelessness, or selfishness, or pure indifference. Unfold such a prospect to him, and you will disgust him beyond expression, you will positively insult him. Boy as he is, he may resent the liberty you have taken with him to his dying day.

However, at this stage of her existence Frances was well-nigh incapable of being baffled, and she addressed herself first, like a good general, to the foe who was bound by all the instincts of his age and sex to give her most trouble. If she could not win over Peter nothing could be done. If she gained him she believed she

could bring round Cherry.

Peter was already the humble servant of his cousin Hamilton. He was fascinated by the beauty and brilliance which enchanted so many; he was much struck by, and deeply grateful for, the generous friendliness which caused her, who was so greatly sought after, who had as it appeared to him so many claims on her time and attention, to spend them on a raw lout like him. She had taken him to the Hamiltons' house at Knightsbridge and introduced him to that galaxy of gallantry, distinction, wit and beauty, in which she now shone pre-eminent to Peter's mind, before which he sat speechless, transfixed with modest wonder and delight.

She had hitherto amused herself with the boy's ungrudging homage and entire subjection to her. Now she was going to turn it to account for his good, as well as her own, no doubt, for where would he get a wife with all the qualities which wear well, like Cherry in her spring-time promise? Where would he find friends such as she and Sir George would be to the husband of Cherry? What an influential connection she was forming for him out of that notable Hamilton circle! What obscure country lad with no more than a peradventure for his future, since the squire of Three Elms might yet take unto himself a wife in his old bachelorhood, have sons and disinherit Peter, was ever favoured with such advantages? And she was kinder to him than ever.

Frances led on the fine company among which she took him to flatter her before him with compliments on the soldierly exploits of the Hamilton brothers, Anthony and George, Richard and John, all departed or departing to form the French king's corps of English gens d'armes, and on the martial glory which they were destined to achieve under Turenne. In the end Peter Thornhurst was persuaded the Hamiltons were so many Paladins with whom the most distant connection was an honour, who could if they would, every time he came across them, so instruct him in the art of war that he himself would have a chance of becoming the greatest general of the age. When he returned from his campaigns covered with honours and scars what would people say down at the homely Kent parsonage? What would Cherry Norton say, after he had carried water for her in the dark and

cleaned knives for her on the sly at a pinch?

Then Frances seized the opportunity of a visit which Peter paid her at her lodging when the two were alone together to commence her attack. She began by positively waxing plaintive. She descanted eloquently on the lone and forlorn condition on her part which was to be the price that she was to pay for her husband's glory. She was to travel with her baby and no better protection or company than Bet Ball the child's nurse, and Barty Knevet, Sir George's odd man, from Gravesend to Rouen and so on either by barge up the Seine, or by posting on land to Paris, where she did not know a single creature out of her husband's troop. She would not have a woman body with a mouthful of sense to turn to, if she felt ill or the child sickened, or if she but pined to hear her mother tongue from less Frenchified lips than Sir George's.

Peter was deeply touched. He would fain have thrown up his commission and attended on his cousin Hamilton if that would not have meant ruin to him and misery to his father, if it had been fit and proper for him to see this lovely unprotected divinity restored to the arms of her husband. He would have given much to know of a woman friend like his worthy step-mother, who would stand by Lady Hamilton in her exile. His heart bled to think of so much beauty and kindness being exposed to hardship

and reduced to solitude.

"If so be Cherry Norton could have ris and come with me, I vow I should have been content and comfortable," sighed the lady. "Sure, Cherry's post here is none so enviable that she should

think twice about quitting it."

Here Frances proceeded to entertain him, as if he did not know it well enough already, with the cheerlessness of Cherry's lot, including the growing melancholy madness and desperate straits of Mr. Hill, the peevish complaints of Mrs. Hill, the clamorous exactions of the children, the waning strength and spirit, as they must wane at last, of courageous, self-denying Cherry.

She was able to put it all so vividly before him that though he had known it from the beginning of his acquaintance with Cherry, he had never seen it exactly in this light. He was ready to sink into the ground with remorse for having, as it appeared to him

at this moment, not so much lightened her burden as aided and abetted her taskmistress by adding the caring for him and his comfort to her other troubles. His heart burned at Cherry's woes as it had erewhile been burning at Frances's.

"If somebody would only take away Cherry from it all, and bestow on her the care and thought for the needs of a growing girl, soon to be a woman, the cherishing and petting which the poor maid wants, but, good lack! has never got," sighed young Lady Hamilton.

"Would not you, Cousin Hamilton?" he burst out in the innocence of his heart. "It would be like you—like your goodness, I mean—and she would be fine company for you on your travels away in France."

"I trow I would, Cousin Peter, right gladly," said Frances warmly, "if it were but in my power. But I am a poor woman of my station and I have Sir George and our little daughter to think of. An' I were to tell thee the truth," she continued insinuatingly, "I have sometimes thought it rested with thee."

"With me!" exclaimed the lad in amazement, "how can that be?"

"Why, if you were to be so moved as to contract yourself to Cherry," said Frances, boldly coming to the point, "with the consent of your father and her guardian of course, and could advance money out of your allowance to pay her expenses, and maybe to forward her a gift now and then, I would undertake to carry her with me to France and keep her till you claimed her, when, if you will believe me who know her well, she would be a godsend to you all the days of your life. Indeed, I have often thought, cousin, that you two were made for each other and would be a pretty pair," said Frances languishingly, but unblushingly.

Peter Thornhurst was staggered with a vengeance. "But I am too young to wed, and Cherry is far, far too young. Besides, I never thought of such a thing," and he laughed nervously.

"Then it is a thousand pities," cried Frances sorrowfully. "Cherry must be left to sink into a kitchen drudge, or more likely to drop into a decline, poor thing, while I must go on my way without company."

"But—but, Cousin Hamilton," stammered the boy, "you never mean to say there is any danger of poor little Cherry's dying of neglect and of the heaviest end of the string in the Hills' house?" And as he blurted out the words he had a horrible feeling that in that case he would have helped to murder Cherry.

"Truly I do," said Frances solemnly, having talked herself into the belief of what she was saying, "and it would be very ill done on your part to leave her to die, when you could save her and render me the greatest service. You must see for yourself that you have made the poor little soul like you better than anybody else in the world, and that she would die to be of the least use to you. But why do I call her little—unless that her frocks are so short? She will be taller than I am, fast. And you do not mean to say, sir," throwing a dash of archness into her serious speech, "that mine is not the properest height for a woman. I vow I know not any girl of her years who is better favoured, were she but prettily dressed, or who giveth greater promise of growing up a sweet and noble creature, especially if she have the fine French finish to her education, than Cherry Norton."

He was more dumfounded than ever.

And so she talked and talked, confounding and bewildering the lad, flattering his budding manhood, piquing his natural gallantry, wringing his kindly compassionate heart, playing upon him in every way till, in his pity for Cherry, his devotion to his cousin Hamilton, and his lack of care for himself, he was ready to do anything—slay dragons, or hamper himself for life by contracting an

absurd marriage with a little girl of twelve.

"Well, cousin, if you think it would work the deliverance of poor Cherry, who does not deserve to be trampled upon, and be a great gain to you, it does not matter so much for me, I am ready to share what I can spare with Cherry. I am a man and can knock about for myself. I shall be going to fight the Dutch one of these days, I trust, and if they give us trouble, as I make no doubt they will, for the Mynheers are stout beggars both by land and sea, I need not be back in a hurry. When I do return, if I ever return, I daresay I shall marry and settle down like my neighbours, and it may as well be Cherry as any other lass," he ended with awkward bluster.

"And I dare swear when that day comes you will not see Cherry's equal far and wide. But if you or she should not be of the mind to carry out your wedlock then," said Frances quickly, "there are such things as the breaking off of youthful contracts."

"I am beholden to you for mentioning it, madam, but when I promise I like to perform," said the lad stiffly, and the quick-witted woman saw she was going on a wrong tack.

"Sure, it would not be like either of you to desire such a

scandal," she hastened to make the amendment.

"And I can do nought till I have writ to my father and asked his consent," Peter began again, speaking with a firmness which looked a little like his coming to his senses. Then the unheard-of ludicrousness of the information he was about to convey got the better of him. "By George, it will sound mortal queer down at Crowbrook—our parish in Kent—that I am thinking of getting married already," and he laughed once more, an unsteady confused laugh.

"But you would not write to your father before you have spoke to Cherry?" said Frances raising her delicately pencilled eyebrows. "When will you speak to her, or should you like me, as we are

such great friends, to do it for you?"

"Oh! thank you kindly, that will be best," exclaimed poor Peter, catching eagerly, with a sigh of relief, at the respite from what he could only see in the light of a most trying proceeding, after his former frank and free relations with Cherry. "You may be able to make out what she wants, if she will tell you plain, whether she would rather bide on as she is in Speedwell Lane or get away with you to France, by letting me marry her right off."

"My dear Peter," said Frances, putting her hand on his shoulder and pressing it confidentially and affectionately, "can you doubt her answer for an instant? Why, she will jump with delight at your offer. What girl would not be proud and happy to secure such a husband? But I will be open with you. I don't desire to ensnare you in order to benefit another; or to incur the reproaches of your relations for not having made you acquainted with the gospel truth. I hope you are sensible that you will not marry a fortune in Cherry Norton. I do not suppose she will ever have a penny of a fortune. As we have understood she is quite dependent on her uncle Hill whose affairs are at their last gasp, and with such a family he will never make up his losses."

Frances stopped triumphant in her undeniable candour, which

was really a master stroke of genius.

"I am not seeking a portion," said Peter, proudly, lifting up his head which he had been hanging a little. "I never thought to marry a fortune, soon or late. I am willing to make my own, or to let it be as Providence willeth. I am only thinking of serving Cherry Norton, who, you tell me, is in a poor plight, though, I'm bound to confess, I did not see as much-nay, nor half as much; but what should I know?" And Peter was guilty of snapping his fingers in his agitation. "I crave your pardon for asking to hear more of the matter. 'Tis of my own knowledge that the wench -thy pardon again for speaking so rude of thy friend-hath over much work, and is put upon in Master Hill's house, notwithstanding she hath always looked bright and willing, which is misleading. But are you main certain, my lady, that there is no other means of redress than what, methinks, in my ignorance doubtless, is a somewhat desperate remedy? As to obliging you, I would fain do it likewise—that I would, and I expect you know it—in poor payment of your goodness to me. Only tell me. Cousin Hamilton," urged Peter wistfully: "art full persuaded Cherry's health will give way, and that thou canst find no other person to go with thee to France and bide with thee there?"

"Sure and certain. If you doubt my word there need be no more on't," replied Frances with the dignity the lovely little lady knew well how to assume. "The girl is outgrowing her strength and overworking herself, any fool may see that—I crave your pardon, Cousin Peter—though she will always look bright and willing on her part of the bargain—it is the child's nature to—till she slip into her grave. Then some folk will wake up and wonder

and be sorry that they were not wiser, tenderer, mercifuller in time. For Cherry gives every promise, as a blind man might see, of being a fortune in herself, a fortune that will never run down, though she hath no other fortune in her lap, such as is apt to take wings and fly away. If it had not been so, I, having an honest cousinly regard for you, my young master, would not have spoke as I have done."

"I believe you, Cousin Hamilton," said Peter humbly.

"As for me," resumed Frances with spirit, "I have not been used to go a-begging for friends, but as sure as death, Peter Thornhurst, I am scant supplied with them in this emergency. People tell me I've made my bed and must lie on it, and for the most part I'm right willing. But if aught should befall George Hamilton and his brothers—and, between us two, it doth go against my proud stomach to be beholden in everything to the Hamiltons—granted I have become one of them by marriage—I have not a living creature to turn to that would be bound to befriend me and my infant. If Bet Ball were out of the way and Barty Knevet gone with his master, we might even come to lack a cup of cold water, in our need, over yonder in France. I am going to foreign parts of my own free will, following my husband as is my wife's duty and pleasure; but France is a strange place to me if it is familiar to him. If he were taken from me in the chances of battle, or in any of the duels which adventurers are quick to engage in, I might fall into penury—I might perish forsaken. Dost wonder that I crave for one face I have known, one kind woman-child even to keep me company and help me to bear up in a sore struggle?"

"No, cousin, no," answered Peter, much affected in response to the emotion which she had called up into her still girlish face. She was such a girl yet herself. It was so strange and pathetic to hear her speak of her infant and refer to her possible widowhood with clasped hands and eyes bathed in tears. He looked on his beautiful young kinswoman, whom he had worshipped as a goddess ever since he had come to town a raw country lad and she had lavished kindness upon him, and he could not withstand her appeal. "It shall never be if it rest with me and Cherry,"

he said determinedly.

CHAPTER XI.

A GIRL BRIDE.

THE next thing was to enlighten Cherry with regard to the promotion in store for her. Frances hired a hackney coach within the hour, took her baby in her arms as another decoy duck and drove to Speedwell Lane, picking up Cherry, for a wonder without any

satellite, and carrying her off for a ride in the masterful way which Frances had been accustomed to practise even where the Hills were concerned.

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Cherry had never lost her passionate affection for Frances. Such an affection for an attractive elder girl is often the first romance in the life of a sensitive, imaginative child who has dwelt in retirement and had few sources of personal interest. It is an affection engrossing, unquestioning, not unlike love in some respects—a kind of idyllic forerunner of love. And as if Cherry had not a swarm of troublesome children always round her, causing her days to be spent in toil and care like those of the most encumbered mother, she extended a full measure of the affection to Frances's beautiful baby, hugging the little Elizabeth and paying the most enthusiastic homage at her infant shrine on every possible opportunity. Cherry was doing this on the present occasion. She had lifted the child from her mother's lap and was holding the live burden as if it was the greatest honour that could come to the devotee for her thin arms—a little like spindle shanks at this date—to be filled and weighed down by it, instead of resting from their She was talking fond, foolish nonsense in answer to the babble of the little one, and cooing over her as a mother pigeon coos over her nestling.

Then Frances, nodding her fair head, said briskly, "In good truth, Cherry, I believe you'll be sorry to lose us two plagues."
"That I will," answered Cherry in simple earnestness. "It will

be the darkest day in my life that I remember, Cousin Frances."
"Then what say you to coming with us and seeing foreign parts

yourself, Cousin Cherry?" demanded the tactician gaily.
"Ah! an' I could," cried Cherry eloquently.

"There is a way," said Frances with tantalizing vagueness and

caution, "if you could bring your mind to it."

Cherry opened her great brown eyes wide, gave a gasp and then recalled herself to a sense of duty. "None that I can see; but you are only fooling me, cousin. Were it otherwise, I must still bide with Uncle and Aunt Hill, and do the little possible I can for them after all they have done for me," said the girl seriously.

"Not if they want to get rid of thee," said Frances a little brutally. "If they have not enough for themselves, it stands to reason, Cherry, that they must do the best they can without you."

She softened her statement when she saw how the girl, who was not without the knowledge that the question of her leaving the Hills had been mooted between husband and wife, shrank at the words.

"Cheer up, Cherry," Frances enjoined her. "Others want you if these curmudgeons don't—others who will do a deal more for you and be main proud and happy to do it, if you'll let them."

"Don't say 'curmudgeons,' said Cherry in a quivering voice.
'They've never grudged me bite or sup all these years till now.

I've shared alike with them and their children. It hath ever been, 'Cherry, have you had enough? Come again, my girl, here's more yet to part between us,' when there was none too

much for them and the children."

"They might have said that to any servant to whom they paid no wages, beshrew them!" said Frances carelessly; "no, no, thou must take a new master and thou must not begin by spoiling him. Let me set you the example. Doth it strike you that I spoil my master?" asked Frances with laughing eyes.

"You are different," said Cherry mystified; "you are a married woman, and in a sense Sir George is your master, but in another sense he is your sworn servant, and, sure, he'll keep his vow."

"It will be the worse for him if he doth not, and he knoweth it," said Frances coolly; "at the same time that was mighty prettily said, and I should like a friend of yours to hear it. You must not let him cozen you out of requiring him to perform

his servant's duties."

"I do not understand you, Cousin Frances," said Cherry, still utterly lost to the speaker's meaning. "Either I am stupider than usual this afternoon, or you are funning me beyond bounds. Is it you that doth want me, that would have me with you and let me see foreign parts? That is just like you, and, methinks, in that case never girl would have had a nobler friend and mistress. But woe's me! it cannot be; you must see it as well as I, though your soul is so great—greater than your reason, and that ain't small. It is only your dainty body that is like a fairy queen's. Nay, laugh not, my lady, for you are my beautiful lady as well as my sweet Cousin Frances. How could I be such a burden on you when you have told me with your own dear lips that Sir George's going to France and your settling there have made such a hole in your income that you will have to sell some of your fine clothes to discharge your travelling expenses? Oh! if the squire and madam at Holywell would but help their own daughter, and such a daughter! with Sir George so brave a soldier, and this dear baby-

"Have done, Cherry," said Frances shortly, looking anything

rather than sweet.

But Cherry was too much carried away by her own feelings to

attend to her lady.

"I'm certain Cousin Bab would speak up for you," she urged, "and even if they would not spare you money, oh! Cousin Frances, if you would but take some steps to be reconciled to madam, your mother, and the squire, your father, ere you go—you will forgive me for mentioning it? Uncle Hill says that the last hath been but a poor harvest, while the Dutch fleet hovering about is ruinous to our trade, which may excuse the squire for not advancing part of your portion. But, dear heart, if a word of old kindness passed between you," entreated Cherry with humble

wistfulness, "you would depart with a lighter heart and carry

a blessing with you."

"Don't speak of it," said Frances, looking very black, as the women of the Jennings family, with the exception of Bab, were wont to do when they were thwarted or interfered with. "You mean well, Cherry, but you must leave alone my private affairs. I am quite able to look after them without thy advice. Oh! dear no, there is no offence taken, silly wench. But, prithee, it was your business, not mine, that we were discussing. You are wrong in thinking it is I who want you—not that I don't want you neither, though you've contracted that infection of the Hills' house against which I warned you ages ago. You would preach too, for as young and pretty as you are; but keep your preaching for your master-there is a master in the matter, though you think fit to style me your mistress. Ain't you curious to learn his name? Why, what a little hypocrite you are, child, not to press me, catch my hands, and half wring them off, say you'll drop Baby out of the window next you, if I don't that minute say his name. Didst fail to draw thy valentine last February? Hast never laid a nine-peaced pod on the threshold of the house-door, watched breathless for the first man's foot which should cross it, and cried, 'Hey! here! you fellow, you chair-man or potman, or beggar, what be you called by your familiars? What name did your mother's gossip give you at your christening?' Cherry, I take pity on your desperate anxiety. Your man's name begins with a P., and it doth not stand for an English pope or prior, or a prince of any country. Dost take me at last? It is 'Peter,' not the Muscovite, nor the painter, somebody nearer home."

"Peter Thornhurst," guessed Cherry bluntly, without any emotion, save a little merriment. "Your heart must be light to make game of me and Peter. I wot he never thinks of me, save when he wants to break his fast earlier than usual, or hath forgot what he did with his gloves. But I ought not to say that neither," Cherry corrected herself remorsefully, "for many a good turn he hath done me, and helped me all he could, not to say given no trouble in the house that he could avoid. Oh! yes, he is a good lad, though, do you know, cousin, his teeth are set a monstrous space apart, and did you ever notice how he will tramp—forgetting his promise to the contrary—through the vilest puddles between the City and Whitehall, bringing back no end

of mud to soil the floor cloths?"

"Nay, you must not find fault with Cousin Peter, Cherry," said Frances meaningly, "for he do think no end of you. Let me say in your ear, he is the man who wants you—wants you so much that if he got his way he would be contracted to you one of these days, and have you kept for him till he and you are of an age for him to claim you. He would furnish you with the means to go over with me to France and be made a finely educate young

lady. Think of all that, Cherry, and dare to say ill of him and his teeth again."

Cherry certainly sat motionless; she did not laugh like Peter,

but she was fully as incredulous.

"Impossible, Cousin Frances," she declared stoutly; "there is some huge mistake. He never said a word which could mean such a mad thing. What would a boy like him do with a wife?" and at last Cherry giggled at the absurd idea. "If you only saw what an appetite he hath, you would judge that he could eat a family larder bare by his own exertions. He would rather play a game at single-stick with some lad of his own years than have a word to say to any woman for a dozen years to come—always excepting yourself, for whom he hath a great admiration and honour, seeing you have been so condescending to his rusticity. What idle nonsense is this?"

Frances saw that it was time to take high ground with the contumacious damsel, to whom she had spoken half jestingly before, but now she grew as grave as a judge, a blooming girl-judge, another Portia. "I am fair astonished at you, Cherry Norton. If you think fit to refuse an excellent offer-well, after all, that is for you to decide, nobody is seeking to force your will, though you are so much under age that your friends might believe they were justified in treating for you; and I crave leave to warn you, madam, you'll not get the declining of such another husband for many a day, if ever. Men are becoming scarce, what with the wars and the plague, and it is not every young fellow who would look at a girl like you—I put it plainly for your good—without a penny, who may yet grow up crooked, or catch the small-pox, and be clean marred before he can have you. But to refuse is one thing, to make a mock of an honest, honourable proposal is vastly different. It is neither like a polite gentlewoman, nor a good Christian. to his not having said a word about marriage to you, he and I have spoke the thing over, which is both more respectful to you and more discreet. What should a lad like Peter do with a wife. quoth she? Marry, Cherry, what should he do without one, or a mother or sister or kinswoman, however distant-since I am going abroad, in this great wicked, cruel city, to take his part and keep him right amidst the manifold temptations (that I should speak like Uncle Hill!) which are in waiting for him to close in round him and drag him down to perdition. Oh! it is so pitiful, with him so frank and free, poor Cousin Peter! so unthinking of evil, so kind as you have been forced to admit. Ah! Cherry, you must have a hard heart."

"But, but," protested Cherry, stammering in her distress and trembling all over, "he is not a fool, he knoweth right from wrong, he can seek the grace of God, which is for every man, to fight his foes. His friends have not been frighted to trust him here, and he hath not gone astray up to this time, so far as I can

tell. I am four years younger than he; moreover, how could I help him if I went with thee to France and left him behind here

in London?" asked Cherry pertinently.

"He knows, or he will know in time," said Frances confidently. Then she added severely, "I am not a heathen that thou shouldst twit me with the grace of God, Cherry Norton, and how dost thou know," she started off with an audacious adaptation of Cherry's argument, "that the grace of God may not be guiding him even now, to secure the thought of you to hold him steady and constant to duty? Some day he would have you to reign with him at Three Elms. What a squire Peter Thornhurst will make when his comb is cut! his country breeding, his strong frame, his love of farming and sport will all be so many counts in his favour then. I ain't certain that the camp, for which my George was born, would not pall on Cousin Peter in time, though he is wild about it, like other youngsters, to begin with. But he is cut out for a stout squire, country justice and captain of the train-bands, and I do not know another girl, not sister Bab herself, who would make a wiser, gentler and more content madam to my squire than thou wouldst, Cherry."

"No, no!" denied Cherry, catching at any straw, "I am town

bred; I know little or nought of the country."

"But thou lovest it and canst learn," insisted the temptress. "The truth is, you and Bab are not of the stuff that maids-ofhonour are made of; and you would not have me ware you on the starvation of a country parsonage, which poor Peter roughed in his young days, to teach him what his comfortable hall and his wife's dainty parlour are worth when he is in his prime. Oh, Cherry! I think I see you in your still-room and in your linen press at Christmas and Easter, dispensing cloth cloaks and babies' long clothes, drugs and cordials to the poor for six miles round. You will sing to your harpsichord, as you will learn from the best masters in France, work at your needle, read romances on week days and Jeremy Taylor on Sundays. It is as well that I shall be in exile, for I could not hold a candle to you. But I want the stir and excitement of a city and the glamour of a court, if I can get it-I want opposition and rivalry. Lord! I'm not peaceful and meek, I'll be a bit of a firebrand wherever I go-but you, you'll be as happy as the day is long and a blessing to the whole neighbourhood-not to say to the man who gets you."

Cherry began to cry; she did not know what else to do, she was so amazed and bewildered. At the sight of her tears the baby set up a whimper which increased the confusion in the girl's mind and brought down upon her an energetic "Stop that, Cherry!"

from the little mistress of the ceremonies.

"But his people would never hear of such a thing," Cherry tried to say through her arrested sobs, "even if Peter Thornhurst hath lost heart himself and wants a girl to back him."

"Cherry!" said Frances indignantly, "have you never read in your Bible that a man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife? Peter hath left them already, and it is not a mother, but a step-mother and a half-breed of brothers and sisters who are in question. That must make a great difference in such duty and

service as he owes them."

"I don't know that," objected Cherry; "Peter is very fond of his little brothers and sisters, and he says his step-mother hath been a mother to him ever since she came to the Parsonage. He was wanting to show me how he was accustomed to play ball with Jenny and Joan, and I could have liked a game, if I could have spared the half-hour. Oh, Cousin Frances! we are but a boy and girl, he and I!" broke out Cherry, twisting and untwisting her brown fingers, "for all he wears a sword, and Aunt Hill says it will soon be time I changed my cap for a top-knot. It is grown men and women who marry; it would be little short of a wicked farce for such a solemn ceremony to be performed between Peter Thornhurst and me."

"You are out there, if you think such marriages don't take place many a time," said Frances with all the easy confidence of superior knowledge. "There was the late king's daughter, Princess Mary, she was not above ten when she was wed to the Prince of Orange, and I have heard tell it was a pretty sight, and they were a most happy couple till death did divide them. Have you not heard me speak of the little Duchess of Monmouth? She is no older than you, no, nor is the little Duchess of Grafton. You are in high company, Mrs. Norton, if so be you marry Cousin Peter. But the finest story of all is that of my young Lady March, who is not so young now, but she was just in her teens when she and Lord March were married in haste to suit their two fathers and their lands, in the middle of the civil war, which parted them for a time. Then my lord was fain to rue his part of the bargain——"

"Oh, yes! cousin," cried Cherry excitedly.

"Wait, it is ill-mannered to interrupt my tale. He would not return at the Restoration. He was in no hurry to embrace his wife, whom he would not have known though he had seen her, so it seems. For when he did appear in London and went to the King's theatre, whom should he spy but a beautiful young woman in one of the boxes he could not take his eyes off! He did not think he had ever beheld her before, and he could not guess who she might be. When he asked a stranger, he was told she was my Lady March, one of the reigning beauties of the day. I trow he did not tarry then to pay his duty to his wife, and I was advised they

are the fondest husband and wife in the kingdom."*

^{*} Frances might have added, if she had known the end of the story, the attachment between Lord and Lady March was so strong and lasting that when, after a number of years, one of the two died, the other, overwhelmed with grief, did not survive the bereavement many days.

"I cannot compass what Uncle and Aunt Hill and the children will do, even though they wish me to go," said Cherry forlornly.

"A fig for the Hills!" cried Frances impatiently. "They ought to be able to manage for themselves by this time-you are bound to leave them as Cousin Peter is leaving his father and mother. But wait till you are the lady of Three Elms and then you can have the whole Hill family down in a body at your place. Rather you than me," with a lively shrug, "but that is neither here nor there. Thou mayst let Uncle Hill preach himself hoarse, denouncing the sins of the nation to the cottagers, and give the pests of children—sick Peter and the rest—treats of bird-nesting and blackberry hunting and nutting, like you were so pleased with at Holywell. I don't fancy the squire—your Peter, I mean would raise any obstacle, if so be his madam was pleased."

Cherry, for the first time in the conversation, blushed scarlet. She knew Peter was a good lad, she had frequently been obliged to him for his kind offices, but now a sudden overpowering sense of the magnitude of his generosity in his being willing to do

so much for her, came over her.

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Frances was still improving her opportunity. "The Hills! the Hills!" she exclaimed derisively and with a pout. "Who and what are the Hills, I should like to know? Name anybody save them-always their convenience to be put first. Dost care nought for me, Cherry, and my little Bess you've pretended to be fond of, away from all our friends, perchance sick and sorry, perchance drawing our last breath in a strange country? But little you would care so that you had your precious Hills."

"Cousin Frances, don't speak like that," cried the passionately. "You know I would rather be with you than with anybody; you know I would be proud—it would be the greatest pleasure of my life to do aught for you. If Peter is so kind as to wish this (but we must take care he is not left straitened for means; he is a man, he is none so good a manager), if it will serve him in the long run-oh I wish I knew what I ought to do," cried

Cherry in the greatest perplexity.

"Do what Peter and I wish," counselled Frances. "If I were you I'd as lief follow our lead as that of the Hills, who cannot keep you any longer, and what is to become of you otherwise it beats

me to say."

"What matters it "It is not about me," said Cherry simply. for me? I could be a child's maid, sure, somebody would have me. But if I could help Bet Ball to wait on you and this dear baby, and make the voyage more bearable for you—Heaven grant I be not sick myself, who have been on no water bigger than the river—I would be fit to fling myself overboard sooner than be a burden to you, but I might keep well and strong since I've always been healthy-if I could cheer you up when you were lonesome in France, then it might be right to marry Peter-he soliciting it,"

she ended pensively.

All that was left was to get the consent of Peter's father, which would insure the acquiescence of such guardians as the Hills, who had too much to do looking after themselves to be over particular in the disposal of Cherry Norton. When it came to that, according to the ordinary standard, she had much the best of it. The Hills knew Peter to be a worthy lad for his years, a sound Protestant if not an Anabaptist, and not altogether a soldier of fortune since he was likely to inherit the estate of Three Elms, whereas Cherry was a friendless, penniless orphan dependent on the good offices of those who were themselves in danger of being indebted to others for their daily bread.

But without the consent of the vicar of Crowbrook the grand scheme would not work; not only Peter, Cherry and the Hills would all draw back, no clergymen would perform the ceremony of marriage for minors in such circumstances. Solitary as the obstacle might be, it would be insuperable, since the parson, though a guileless, mooning scholar, was not precisely a Bedlamite, any more than he was a dead letter in the eyes of the law, and his brother the squire of Three Elms was exceedingly

wide awake.

But Frances managed this as she managed everything else in the business. She arrested Peter, who had wandered back to her lodging in the utterly conglomerated state of mind of a man or rather of a lad who has committed himself to be one of the principals in a marriage, which he never so much as contemplated till it was thrust upon him, within the space of a week. At the same time he is totally uncertain whether the marriage will really come off as has been projected, or whether it will vanish the next minute like an airy gossamer seen by the light of the moon. She set him down at her standish and caused him to write a letter to his father under her direction.

It was a confused jumble of insinuations, inducements and obligations. It represented all which he and Mrs. Cherry Norton, of whom he had writ in describing the Hills' household, owed to young Lady Hamilton. It dwelt on the supreme importance it was to Peter's future fortunes that he should retain, and as it were confirm his friendship with the Hamilton family. They were people of the greatest consequence, first favourites with the King, though as soldiers they had by a temporary tyrannical interdict of the Parliament's, to take service where the best was to be had, with great renown and high pay under King Louis. The Hamiltons would never lose sight of Peter if he were to do them a favour, and were to double the slight connection he had with them already through his cousin Hamilton, while their hostility was a misfortune to be dreaded. It was as good as the possession of a moderate fortune for a man to have a hold on the Hamiltons, such as Mrs. Cherry

Norton had through the great love borne her by the Thornhursts' kinswoman, young Lady Hamilton. In proof of the last, after the maid's expenses, her share in the barge to Gravesend, and in the passage money across the Channel, and in the berline or barge on the other side to Paris, were paid by her bridegroom or his relations, Lady Hamilton would undertake to keep her free of charge, treat her as an own sister, and see that her education was finished as it ought to be, until such time as her husband should see fit to claim her—the longer he was of doing so the better cousin Hamilton would be pleased. The letter went on to a dissertation on the charms and virtues of poor Cherry, ending with a brief question whether Peter ought not to seize the chance of settling in life so much to his advantage, with so little trouble and even less responsibility settlements not so much as mentioned—till he was of an age to make a good wife with influential connections highly valuable to The incoherent epistle wound up with an urgent petition that the letter might be answered by the return of the carrier, as time and tide would wait for no man, and Lady Hamilton was or the eve of setting out on her journey, which could not be delayed. The Rev. Jedidiah Thornhurst read and re-read the extraordinary communication in his parsonage parlour, called, "Wife, wife, come and hear this strange piece of news," and rubbed his mild muddled forehead in vain in order to understand the affair. He got little assistance from his wife, a well-disposed but excitable woman, who kept crying, "Lord-a-mercy, Jenny, Joyce, Joan, Dolly, if our boy Peter ain't thinking of getting a wife," as if she had lost her wits.

The Rev. Jedidiah did not see how he was to give his consent to anything so preposterous as saddling a boy like Peter, whose beard had not even sprouted, with a wife who could be of no earthly use to him, seeing she was to depart forthwith to France and grow up there with the risk of her learning foreign tricks, however promising the young wench might be at present, and though their good cousin Hamilton, who had been so kind to her and Peter, was to take care of her, and would look after her principles without doubt. On the other hand, he did not see how he was absolutely to refuse his consent and make mortal enemies of these powerful Hamiltons, who might well mar his boy's future career, perhaps force a duel upon him and end his young days in a trice. Unfortunately, Three Elms was not within a long day's ride of Crowbrook, so that the disturbed parson could not repair to his brother the squire to have the benefit of his advice, and to let him have the voice in his nephew's affairs to which he was entitled.

Lastly, as the crowning catastrophe, no time was given to the Revd. Jedidiah to think—a process which in spite of his book learning was always slow and laboured where he was concerned. He was besought to write by the return carrier, who was to leave by daybreak the following morning.

In the strait the Revd. Jedidiah tried, as so many of us do in

our difficulties, to gain a breathing space by temporizing. He gave what sanguine people might take as a conditional consent, but charged his son Peter to do nothing further till he heard from him in full (after he had communicated with Peter's honoured uncle at Three Elms), which would be by the next carrier, leaving in another fortnight. Then he spent a whole paragraph of his hurried letter in a short homily on marriage—the gist of which was that it was a grave business which required all the wisdom a man could bring to bear on it, and he did not think that his son Peter was come to the years which entitled him to consider him-

self qualified to deal with the matter.

"Your worthy father hath consented," cried Frances with conviction, reading at a glance the letter which Peter brought her, the boy being still greatly exercised in spirit and unable to look Cherry in the face, even as Cherry was unable to look at him, for the last four or five days. "It is impossible for us to wait for another letter. We are not to be expected to dance attendance on any old crow down in Kent-I beg your pardon, cousin Peter-but we shall be half-way across the Channel by that time-that is, if we can escape the plaguy Hollanders. I must not fail Sir George, who expects me in Paris long within the month. I will take what responsibility is like to remain, upon myself. I must see Aunt Hill and Cousin Cherry instantly. There are clothes and things to furnish. Let me think, this is Monday, we had better say Friday for the ceremony, since we must sail this day se'ennight without fail. Nay, marrying on Friday won't do, I'd as lief meet a hare at starting; let it be Saturday, which will allow another twenty-four hours to a sewing woman. Perchance Uncle Hill will not enter a church any more than if it were a mosque, and in that case we'll have to seek for another man to give Cousin Cherry away in her uncle's name. My brother Anthony is still in the country and hath an obliging humour, he might undertake the job, but Ill see to it. I have a thousand things to do at the last moment, but thou mayst safely depend on me, Peter, that I'll see to it," Frances ended with an airy assurance. '

CHAPTER XII.

A SECOND WEDDING.

PETER and Cherry were actually married on the faith of the Revd. Jedidiah's halting letter and the consent given by the Hills, before an embargo could come from Kent. If there was any informality in the matter Frances was a person of sufficient audacity and influence in the world to make it pass. The ceremony took place in the presence of Frances and the Hills, whose consciences did not prove an obstacle. The husband and wife even brought

the bigger children into the polluted national church. One of Cherry's last efforts in their service was furbishing up the long coats and long frocks so as to pass muster, to the hardly repressed annoyance of Frances, who regarded the small fry as an eyesore in the presence of the more ornamental portion of the guests, including one or two of the Hamiltons and their cronies. These were tickled by the ludicrous account which Sir George's managing young madam gave of the marriage which was of her making, and of the tender ages of the bridegroom and the bride, therefore the fine folk elected to grace the occasion. They even, with the freehandedness of impecunious people, and the love of fun and frolic which distinguished the family, arranged that the wedding feast should be held in their house at Knights-bridge, and Peter and Cherry did not need their Cousin Frances to impress upon them that this was a great honour.

The scene of the wedding was one of the old churches near Speedwell Lane, which perished in the fire of London. It was the first of September, a baking hot and tinder dry morning, at the close of a hot, dry summer. Everybody was gasping for air and for even the little freshness which the moisture of a passing shower, falling on the dusty, ill-smelling stones and the blistering, scaling surface of the wood and plaster houses, would convey. But there was no cloud in the hard fixed plue of the sky, which had lasted long enough for the dwellers under it to crave gray shadows, mists and tempests. There was general talk of a great revival of the

plague if the weather did not change speedily.

Frances was almost ready to welcome the sea-voyage at hand. As for Cherry, who was to be one of the travellers, she was far too mazed and dazed with the strange turn events had taken to be able to look beyond the present momentous hour—so much to any bride and at once so stunning and distracting to poor little

Cherry.

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A marriage attended by members of the quality, with a couple of fine coaches and three or four chairs at the church door, would have been sure in that City region to gather a small crowd of idle lookers-on, hanging about the porch and straggling into the aisles. But the fact which had got abroad that the bridegroom and bride were under age, a mere boy and girl, considerably increased the informal company. In spite of Frances's assertion that such marriages were frequent, they were, though permissible and lawful under certain conditions, a practice confined largely to the higher aristocracy. Even among the élite the practice was sufficiently uncommon to render its occurrence an event to the vulgar public. Inquisitive, interested men and women went out of their way and dawdled, wasting their time, to witness the marriage of Peter and Cherry. For the most part the spectators called it, quite enthusiastically, a sweetly pretty or vastly charming sight. For Peter, in his new regimentals with a lace cravat tied in a huge bow, and

his unruly hair combed back, pomatumed and powdered, was a likely enough lad, in spite of his broad nose far apart, and Cherry was absolutely charming. She was dressed up in a brocade of Frances's hastily made down for her. She carried the long train, in default of a page, over one trembling arm, and with the other hand swayed waveringly a feather fan. Her dark hair was twined into long curls looped up with pearls—more of Frances's "gallantry," as some of the writers of the day designed a woman's finery.

If the edified gazers could have seen nearer and farther they might have detected a certain strain of boyish sulkiness and desperation qualifying the manliness of Peter's air, something which might have been expressed in such rebellious reckless words as: "I'm in for it, and there's no way of getting out of it; here goes, 'twill soon be over." A close observer might have recognized that the youth gave but one hurried glance at Cherry, to whom at the same time he was as punctiliously polite as he knew how, and turned away with a still more bewildered, discomfited look than his face had worn hitherto. This was not the Cherry he had known in her short shabby frock and tumbled hood, for whom he had done a turn of work, with whom he would have romped when he was in the mood, if she would but have left off her scrubbing and cooking and tending of the younger children to play with him. This was not the drudge of a girl, done to death with over-work, to whom waiting on his cousin Hamilton would be a sinecure by comparison, while she would lighten that incomparable little lady's burden of loneliness and domestic care. This was as fine a lady as cousin Hamilton herself, a young princess for aught he knew; and what had he to do with young princesses? How had he been so misled and taken in? This was an utter stranger to him; this dressedup, preoccupied young maid with the far-away look in her shy drooping eyes, and her soft round cheeks flushing and paling from red to white with alarming rapidity. What was he to make of her even for the couple of days that they were to be together? The Cherry he had been accustomed to had been a plain, companionable little wench, to whom he could speak almost as to a boy, whom he might have sent on his errands if she had not had too much to do without them. She was not, unless in the prospect of her early decline which had been flourished before him, a delicate creature like this. What was he to make of her, tied to him for the rest of his life, though by good luck kept at a distance from him, for a period of years which he should take care not to lessen? He had no desire for such a fine piece of goods; he supposed she would be fainting on his hands next; oh, what a thundering young fool he had been. What would his uncle at Three Elms say? He had not meant to think of a wife for half a score of years or more, till he had seen one or two campaigns, was old enough to be the head of a family, and strong and wise enough

to cope with such a ticklish relation. Then he would have chosen a strong hearty woman like mother down in Kent, who would look after herself and manage the household without troubling What he wanted now, if he could get it, was to get away from it all, so he thought, as his eye roamed over the heads of the group of which he formed an indispensable unit, past the surpliced clergyman and the clerk and the effigy of the knight in armour against the mildewed wall, up to a corner of a stained glass window, behind which the sun was glaring pitilessly, though its trapped beams fell dimly and duskily enough on the strange pair standing and kneeling in front of their friends. It was fantastic and unreal as the dream of a disordered mind. He would fain have been rid of every figure in it, of this metamorphosed Cherry, of Mr. Hill frowning and Mrs. Hill sniffing at the words of the service, and the children staring as if their goggle eyes would drop out of their heads, of the blandly gracious Hamiltons, even of his bewitching cousin, who had undone him by making him undertake responsibilities he had never dreamt of. Oh! to be back in the homely, simple Kent parish, among the single-hearted, slow-spoken, matterof-fact friends of his boyhood, who were guiltless of being changed as by a fairy's wand, or of mystifying people or playing pranks of any kind. If he were at Crowbrook now, instead of in this noisy, gaudy, filthy London, of which he had thought so much first when he came to it, he would be tramping with his gun on his shoulder over the dewy stubble, with nothing on his mind save the bag of game he would take home to fill the parsonage larder before sundown.

But it would have been hard for the most eager, earnest watcher—unless it were a woman who was personally acquainted with the mystery of virgin love in its first ethereal dawn—a woman whose eyes were at once sharpened and purified by loss and sorrow—to trace to their source the indications of Cherry's fitfully changing colour, her eyes now shining like stars, now deeply shadowed as they fall beneath their modest lids, the thrill of her little hand, cold as death on the hot autumn day, and trembling like a leaf when it was put into Peter's burning hand. It would have taken such a tenderly, sadly wise woman to understand the trance into which the sensitive imaginative child had fallen, in which she had advanced as if she were walking in her innocent sleep to her fate.

There were very few persons there who were alive to the piteous barbarity of what so many called "a sweetly pretty, a vastly charming sight," else surely some chivalrous spirit would have started up to forbid the banns at the last moment. For it was tearing open the silken promise of the rosebud and wasting its faint immature fragrance on the coarse common air, heavy and pungent with the robust odours of strongly warring elements. It was profanely trifling with the most solemn obligations. It was

sacrilegiously invading with a bold, careless step the most holy sanctuary of the human heart, the door of which ought to have been kept jealously closed and guarded till God in nature gave the word to throw it wide. It was binding for what might be the long night of time, two inexperienced helpless human creatures, whose inexperience and helplessness ought to have been their most unassailable protection, who were incapable as yet of knowing themselves or each other, or of measuring the grand and sweet possibilities of that world on which they were just entering. The hapless couple might well end their union by dragging horrid chains instead of clasping genial ties, and hating with a fierce hatred what they should have loved with a tender love.

Such considerations did not for an instant disturb Frances's volatile and equally cool and confident mind, she was simply full of triumph at the success of her machinations, she was further fully persuaded that both her victims, especially her protégée Cherry, owed a debt of gratitude to their energetic, dauntless

patroness.

Not even Mr. Francis Hill in his gloom was cognizant of the dubious nature of that September morning's work, else, to do him justice, he would never have consented to it. For if he was anything he was sternly righteous. But this was merely a marriage contract which was all in favour of his niece, Cherry Norton, about whose poor fortunes, powerless as he was to better them, or even to continue to maintain them at their present low level, he had occasionally fretted, as much as he ever did fret himself about worldly matters. But what were marriage contracts to the terrible issues of Eternity, to the passports to Heaven or to Hell, of which every man and woman had the acceptance or the rejection—a choice which was enough to occupy frail mortals? He felt a little vexed that Cherry, who was a good wench, as far as any unregenerate maid was good, should go with his niece by marriage-Frances Jennings, or Hamilton, a frivolous, unruly spirit, whether single or married—and with the Romanist Hamiltons, to a benighted country of dissolute Papists like France. But the younger girl had always entertained an infatuation for the elder, and there was no help for it. The Hamiltons and France formed but a fraction of humanity, and of the wicked world on which he had seen for some time that he must launch Cherry. With regard to Peter Thornhurst, to whom she was contracted, Francis Hill could only see him in the light of a safeguard and Godsend, without which he would have scrupled, hard bested as he was, to give up Cherry to the Hamiltons.

Peter and Cherry having been made one, were to spend the afternoon with Frances at her lodging, where her packing was completed, previous to being carried to hold their wedding feast at the Hamiltons'. This was a transparent ruse on the part of Frances to get rid of the Hills, of whose not very exhilarating

company she was heartily sick. Indeed, Mrs. Hill was deep "in the dumps." She could not refuse to let Cherry marry. Mrs. Hill's own marriage had not been very satisfactory, but she knew all girls were expected to marry when a tolerable offer came in their way; nevertheless she did not know what on earth she was to do without Cherry, and she could not be called on to rejoice at her own stranded position. Frances caught at the first pretence for

turning her back on her lachrymose aunt.

Lady Hamilton's contribution to the festivities of the day was to take the bridegroom and bride in their marriage splendour, a spectacle to be appreciated in Hyde Park, where many a noble young couple before them had magnanimously shown themselves. But unfortunately Lady Hamilton encountered some of her acquaintances, to whom she had to present the youthful pair, and she could not resist sending them to walk on in front, while she fell back to follow with her friends, and make game of the sheepishness of the bridegroom and the unheard-of sedateness of the bride. Peter saw what his Cousin Hamilton was about, and his eyes, which were beginning to be opened, were still further enlightened, till he was on the eve of open revolt, and of flinging himself away from the whole foolish business.

Cherry awoke in part also, a sad awakening. She was accustomed to her cousin's inconsiderateness and love of her own amusement far beyond her friends' peace of mind. She was also in the habit of swallowing these characteristics as part of Frances, with blind devotion. But here was Peter Thornhurst fuming like a grown man who is entitled to respect, while she, Cherry, on her wedding day, had not only to stand the affront of being laughed at, she had to smooth down the ruffled plumes of her partner, who, under his unusual politeness, was tetchy and unlike himself, would not be appeased, and hardly let her speak to him. Poor little bride! it was a bad beginning and a poor look-out for her. She had not lived so long in the house with her plighted husband as not to know that his temper was not his strong point, but she had never before seen him so ruffled and unreasonable. She was driven to fear that when the fit was upon him he was moodier and more prone to wrath even than her Uncle Hill. Happily for Cherry, she was gentle and patient by nature, and had served a long apprenticeship to submission. She was accustomed, even when she had to bear a peevish woman's murmurs, to give the man of the house carte blanche for yet more violent humours, to which the woman and the children had as a matter of course to submit, and be thankful when the storm abated. Cherry's idea of the part which a wife had to play in such circumstances was to say indulgently, "Poor Jonas! or poor Humphrey! he has risen off his wrong side. He is out of sorts; things have gone wrong with him: he will be the first to be sorry when the blast has blown over."

It was better when the little party got to the Hamiltons' for the banquet. Peter recalled his best manners to master his dudgeon. He might have been thankful that his cousin Hamilton did not yet see it. Now that her point was gained she would have made sport of it likewise. She would have drawn out the angry lad's grievance, and teased and baited him till he was half mad. But the exquisite breeding of the Hamiltons came to the relief of their young guests. If the hosts laughed at them, as such laughter-loving people could scarcely fail to do, it would be so thoroughly in the laughers' sleeves, with such courtesy and pleasantness, that the most irate, bashful lad or lass, in place of taking umbrage, would be restored to self-complacency.

The old glamour of these gallant, gay men and fair, bright women charmed the evil spirit in Peter. Cherry had no evil spirit in her to be laid at rest; she was there to be won from her sleep-walking to marvel and admire, to be not so much flattered as touched to the quick, by the gracious friendliness of the delicate flattery which was so perfect in its art as to sound absolutely

sincere.

Moreover, neither Peter nor Cherry was beyond the age, or had been too sated by luxuries to relish the banquet of which they were the hero and heroine. The dainty French dishes, the sugared cakes, the bon-bons, the succory water, the spiced posset,

had each and all a full appreciation.

The crown was given to the condescension when the elegant Comte de Grammont deigned to propose the health of his dear young friends the bride and bridegroom in a speech of high-flown compliment, the like of which was not to be heard on this side Calais. Cherry was profoundly impressed, yet she could not help liking better a word or two about "the young sir" and "the little madam," dropped by Anthony Hamilton. There was a ring of simplicity in the good-natured, easy-going kindliness of the refined literary vagabond which struck her, child as she was.

It was just after these speeches that a turn was given to the conversation and a slight sensation created by an old French serving-man coming in, and, with the respectful familiarity and fluency of his nation and class, volubly calling the attention of

the company to the fact that London was burning.

"It is a bonfire to celebrate your marriage, sir and madam," said Frances, making a low courtesy, for, like the rest of the people there, she regarded the servant's speech as a Gallic exaggeration.

But when Peter and some of the gentlemen were seeing Lady Hamilton and Mrs. Peter Thornhurst—how Cherry's heart throbbed and fluttered at the strange, inappropriate title! to the lodgings of the former, walking by the ladies' chairs in singularly clear, dry moonlight, all agreed that the fire to which the lackey had referred was bigger than usual, and must be burning beyond Mark Lane.

"Heaven grant it reach not Speedwell Lane," Cherry ventured to say, with such trepidation and anguish in her voice that though Frances rallied her, saying that her home was no longer there, and that Speedwell Lane and its inhabitants must look after themselves, Peter took pity on her. He had made up his mind to quit the Hills' when Cherry went on their marrage, and had already hired a lodging nearer his parade ground. Now he was moved to assure her that he would start forthwith to see if the fire were near the Hills', and would bring her word the first thing in the morning, before church time.

"Thank you, very much," said Cherry gratefully, and added in the next breath the imploring charge, "But, oh! take care of

yourself, Peter!"

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Frances tittered, and Cherry hung her head; since the moonlight was bright enough for her to distinguish not only that the polite gentlemen in their train smiled in concert, but that in return for her auxious care a thunder-cloud gathered on Peter's brow.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS, HUMPHRY,

THE recent correspondence on "Music at Home," in a daily paper, was an amusing illustration of the different view taken of the same thing by different persons. "One man's meat is another man's poison," says the old adage. The suggestion that unsuccessful musicians should be engaged to dispense the charms of sweet sounds at so much per hour in private houses, elicited a few approving letters. Whence could these have come? For the majority of us the world is far too full of music, or rather of what passes for such. Are we not all weary of the pianos of our neighbours? When balmy airs of spring follow upon the dull cold of winter, do not our open windows, flung wide to admit the welcome visitor, let in, as well, the "skirls" of some aspirant for lyric fame, who practises her top notes in the modern manner, i.e., by making her mouth absolutely square, and emitting her vocal sounds with an energy that makes her eyes almost start forth from their sockets. When she has finished, the tale is taken up by halfa-dozen pianos, and when the exhausted listener is just beginning to recover from these, a melancholy young man begins to deliver his plaintive soul upon the flute, or, worse still, the cornet. With a few barrel-organs and a German band thrown in, the average dweller in towns has quite too much of music, without hiring the failures of the overcrowded profession for "an hour or two in the afternoon."

Too much music? Could one ever have even enough? Never. But what goes by the name nowadays too often offends both ear and understanding. Singers are not applauded for an exquisitely sweet and simple rendering of some theme that touches the heart, as they were some forty years ago. No! It is somebody's E in alt., a horrible scream, accompanied by a grimace as terrible, that excites the enthusiasm of the modern audience. A few singers—all honour to them!—charm the senses with their softly melodious interpretation of songs within the natural compass of their voices. To artists like these it would be a grave error of taste to attempt a harsh shriek on a top note, or a husky muffled murmur on a low one, when either feat is performed at the sacrifice of melody and sweetness. The art of the true singer occupies itself with perfecting the range of notes that Nature has given. Those who practise for months a note or two beyond their register,

seriously injure their voices, and permanently rob their middle notes of that quality of velvety softness that appeals so irresistibly to the ear of taste.

I shall never forget seeing a learned professor show a young lady how to sing a certain note, and watching the two faces as each alternately disfigured itself in the production of a frightful sound, a daughter of Discord, having no smallest affinity with music. The master's mouth opened square, and the air was filled with the horrid noise he made. The pupil took up the theme, and from a huge orifice where two pretty lips had been smiling a moment before, issued a cry that I can at this moment recall, so shrill and ear-piercing it was. "Good!" said the master, "but we can do better still," and from their own point of view they certainly did. Has the goddess of Harmony forsaken the earth? And is Discord masquerading in her stead? It is certain that one very rarely hears true music, numerous as are the concerts given and enthusiastic as are the audiences. Agility of voice or finger Elaboration is preferred in simplicity's stead. Sweetness is lost sight of in the craving for cleverness. These crowds who cram the concert-rooms find little to delight them in the song of the lark, the mellow note of the thrush, and the wonderful whistle of the blackbird, who puts his own heart and ours into three witching notes. The human voice has a sweetness beyond all these, but the fashionable singing of the hour cares little for mere sweetness. Yet, when all is said, what else does music mean?

Sir Arthur Sullivan has shown himself once more a true artist in his admirable music to "Macbeth" at the Lyceum. Never once do the soft sounds obtrude themselves in the incidental portions, though they surround the sombre play with a charm that it certainly lacks. The brilliant première of the 29th of December will not soon be forgotten by those who were present. Lyceum may be said to have contained all that was best in the circles of literature and art. Had some untoward accident engulphed that one small spot of London on that particular occasion even Mr. Grossmith could hardly have said of the audience that "they never would be missed." Whatever may be the various opinions as to Mr. Irving's Macbeth and Miss Ellen Terry's Lady Macbeth, no one who can possibly manage to see the play should fail to do so. It is the greatest triumph of stage management and thoroughness of detail that the world has ever seen. The noiseless and rapid movement of the heavy scenes falls but little short of marvellous, and the succession of beautiful pictures throughout the play serves to relieve it of much of its inevitable gloom. Miss Ellen Terry never looked more graceful or more lovely; in her mediæval robes she suggested rather Tennyson's Elaine than the fierce and ambitious Lady Macbeth, and the wistful tenderness of her expression was often at variance with the words of her part. This gentle lady cannot be awful and "unsexed," and no one could find fault with her for the incapacity. Mr. Alexander's acting as Macduff was the chief dramatic success of the evening, more particularly in the scene where he learns

that his wife and children have been murdered.

One of the prettiest plays that have ever been put on the stage for the amusement of children is Miss Rosina Filippi's "Little Goody Two-Shoes," produced at the Court Theatre by Mrs. John Wood. It is played by children, of whom a carefully trained company has been got together. The moral is as unimpeachable as it is unobtrusive. The shoes that the farmer finds in his pocket and gives to little "Goody" are of scarlet kid: this one touch shows that some one who understands children has been at the helm. The sigh of ecstasy uttered by a little girl seated near me when these shoes first appeared was from the heart. The scene representing the Land of Leisure is remarkably pretty, the arrangement of colours being very artistic. The costume of the small queen of this country, Miss Flimsy, made a deep impression upon the youthful audience. The little girl who plays this part is extremely clever, and has no trace of the Cockney twang which mars the pronunciation of the others. This invincible twang is the only difficulty that Mrs. Wood and Miss Filippi have not overcome; it is ineradicable from the speech of the London child. The good fairies are all blondes; the bad ones all wear very dark hair—this is decidedly hard upon brunettes. Harmony, however, has dark hair, and her part is as sweet as her plaintive singing. The play is as great a success as it well deserves to be.

To those who are fond of sport I recommend "Fishing in Strange Waters," by Mr. Edward Kennard. The name of this gifted amateur is already known to the public through the various interesting drawings he has from time to time supplied to the Illustrated London News, Graphic. &c. He has now brought together a most delightful series of sketches, representing the gentle art of angling in all its forms, and giving lifelike representations of the fair northern land, famous for its green rushing rivers and mighty snow-clad mountains. The first edition having been quickly exhausted, a second is now to be issued, with letterpress by the artist, which will add greatly to its interest. The volume is written in a terse, vigorous and classical style not

frequently met with in these degenerate times.

Beecham, the well-known proprietor of "Beecham's Pills," has issued a Christmas Annual which is one of the most extraordinary penny publications ever issued. It contains tales by first-class authors like "Ouida," Jessie Fothergill, George R. Sims, R. E. Francillon, R. M. Ballantyne, G. Manville Fenn, &c., &c. and the magazine is copiously illustrated. It also contains the last tale written by the late Hugh Conway, and a new quadrille arranged on popular lines, and all this for a penny!